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STORIES *of the* GREAT OPERAS

RICHARD WAGNER

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ERNEST NEWMAN

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STORIES *of the* GREAT
OPERAS

by
ERNEST NEWMAN

RICHARD WAGNER

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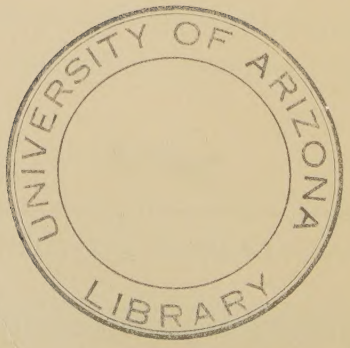

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THIS work has a double object. Every great opera has a two-fold character; the two component parts are supreme music and supreme romance. The aim of this work, therefore, is to tell the story of the *Mastersingers, Tannhäuser, Lohengrin,* and so on, accompanied by a descriptive analysis of the music. The two things, the narrative of the story, or legend, and a full descriptive analysis of the music of the opera (accompanied by illustrative musical quotations) go hand in hand, linked together in each chapter.

The point of view assumed is that of the ordinary music lover who, though an ardent follower of opera, has neither time, nor opportunity, nor aptitude, to study scores and musical history and biography for himself. The main object has been to give such a person all the information he requires for a thorough understanding of what is going on in front of him on the stage, and, further, to help him to grasp many an intention on the composer's part that, for one reason or another, may not always come out clearly in the performance.

STORIES *of the* GREAT

OPERAS

RICHARD WAGNER

TANNHÄUSER

AS was the case with all his later operas, Wagner derived the material for the drama of *Tannhäuser* from a variety of sources. During his stay as a young man in Paris (from September 1839 to April 1842) he had become acquainted with a poem on the subject by Tieck, and also with a story by E. T. A. Hoffmann that describes a contest of song on the Wartburg. Tieck's treatment of the subject he found rather too sugary and prettified.

In a quasi-biography entitled *A Communication to my Friends,* which he published in December 1851, Wagner tells us that during these Paris days " the German Folk-book of Tannhäuser " fell into his hands. What this " Folk-book " may have been it is now impossible to say, as the scholars have not been able to trace any volume corresponding to that description. All we can be sure of is that from some source or other Wagner obtained more first-hand information about the figures of the Tannhäuser story than he had been able to do from either Tieck or Hoffmann. He now probably had an intuition that an excellent subject for an opera lay awaiting him in these legends, so he began to study the Middle-High German poem of the *Sängerkrieg* (the Contest of Song).[1] In this poem, by the way, he also found the nucleus of his future libretto of *Lohengrin.*

With his mind already working at white heat upon the Tannhäuser subject he left Paris for Dresden, and, as luck would have it, passed through the Thuringian valley above which the famous hill

1 " Middle-High German " is a term denoting a particular epoch of German literature, the centre-point of which was the thirteenth century.

of the Wartburg rises. To one of the ridges in the hill his fancy at once gave the name of Hörselberg, the legendary scene of the association between Tannhäuser and Venus. In his autobiography he tells us that as he drove through the valley he saw in imagination the setting for the third act of his opera; and his memory retained all the external details so vividly that long afterwards he could give the Parisian artist who was painting the scenery for the first production the most exact indications.

He took this chance meeting with the Wartburg as a good omen for his as yet unwritten opera. On this occasion he did not actually ascend the hill. This he did for the first time seven years later, when he was fleeing from Germany owing to his complicity in the Dresden rising of 1849. Finding himself at Weimar for a few days in his course from Dresden to Switzerland, he took advantage of his momentary freedom from arrest to make an excursion to Eisenach, and to ascend the battlements of the Wartburg. In 1861, on a journey from Paris to Weimar, he once more crossed Thuringia and passed the Wartburg, which, as he says, "whether I visited it or merely saw it in the distance, seemed so peculiarly connected with my departures from Germany or my return to it."

Fact and fiction are almost inextricably blended in the story of Tannhäuser as we now have it. We know that early in the thirteenth century the Landgrave Hermann of Thuringia organised what are sometimes called "contests of song" on the Wartburg. It is practically certain, however, that in these contests music played no part; they were competitions not of musicians but of poets.

There has come down to us a quaint old picture of one of these contests, from a German manuscript of the fourteenth century; the contestants have no musical instruments, nor is there even any suggestion of their being engaged in singing. Two figures in the upper part of the picture represent the Landgrave Hermann and his wife; the seven figures in the lower half are celebrated poets of the time, whose names are written above them; we can distinguish those of Walther von der Vogelweide, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Klingsor (Wagner afterwards made out of this personage the

magician in *Parsifal*), and Heinrich von Ofterdingen. Wagner compounded his figure of Tannhäuser out of the last-named singer and another, largely mythical, who bore the actual name of Tannhäuser, and was the hero of legends similar to that set forth for us in the opera.

The historical Tannhäuser seems to have been, judging from his poems, fond of the good things of this life, especially wine, good cheer, and love. Apparently his sensuousness did not wholly commend itself to his contemporaries, and the legend grew that for having spent a year with Venus the Pope condemned him for his sin to hell fire, from which sentence, however, he did not, as in Wagner's opera, achieve redemption through repentance and Elisabeth.

Wagner finished his libretto in May 1843 at Dresden. The music of the first act was written between July 1843 and January 1844, the second act in the summer and autumn of the latter year, and the third act before the end of 1844. The instrumentation was finished by April 1845. The original title of the opera was *Der Venusberg* (*The Hill of Venus*). He was induced to discard this title by the publisher of the score, Meser, of Dresden, who, Wagner tells us in his autobiography, " maintained that, as I did not mix with the public, I had no idea what horrible jokes were made about this title; these jokes, he thought, must come from the professors and students of the Medical School in Dresden, as they had a special talent for that kind of obscene joke. The mere suggestion of such objectionable trivialities was enough to induce me to consent to the change." The title under which the opera was published, and by which it was henceforth to be known, was *Tannhäuser and the Contest of Song on the Wartburg*.

In the summer of 1844 the King of Saxony returned to his own territory after a visit to England, and Wagner, who was then one of the conductors of the Dresden Opera, seized the opportunity to pay his homage to him at his country seat at Pillnitz. Wagner took with him the Opera-house orchestra and the members of the Dresden Glee Club, of which latter he was the conductor. Exhilarated by the occasion and by a pleasant drive through the country

in delightful summer weather, there occurred to him a vigorous theme that first made its entry into the world in connection with this act of homage to the King of Saxony, but which Wagner afterwards developed into the highly popular march in the second act of *Tannhäuser*.

Wagner having become a person of considerable importance in Dresden by this time, the new opera was soon put into rehearsal. So confident in advance were the theatre authorities of the success of the work that they went to the unusual expense of having the scenery painted by the artists of the Paris Opera, which was at that time the leading opera-house of the world. New and beautiful costumes were also ordered.

The only point upon which Wagner came into collision with the Intendant of the Dresden Opera, Lüttichau, was in connection with the scenery for the Hall of Song. Lüttichau, no doubt thinking that the new opera was already costing quite enough, wanted to use the setting for the grand hall of the Emperor Charlemagne that had been recently ordered for a production of Wagner's *Oberon,* and Wagner found it almost impossible to convince him that this would not be the right thing at all for *Tannhäuser*.

Finally, in face of Wagner's strongly expressed irritation, Lüttichau gave way and commissioned a proper setting from Paris. This did not arrive in time for the first production, and Wagner perforce had to use the *Oberon* scene after all. The dissappointment of the audience when the curtain rose upon this familiar setting was one of the causes of the lukewarm reception of the opera at its first performance.

We are so familiar with *Tannhäuser* to-day, and even inclined to regard it, in comparison with Wagner's later operas, as a little old-fashioned, that it is somewhat difficult to realise that in its own day it was an effort on the composer's part to do several things that had hardly been attempted in opera before. In the first place, the dramatic motive was every whit as important in his eyes as the music; in the second place, the old distinction between song and recitative had been completely swept away. Both these innova-

tions caused him infinite trouble with his artists. It was with the utmost difficulty that he could get them to refrain from delivering the more declamatory portions of the music in the dry and somewhat unrhythmic way in which they were accustomed to deliver the ordinary recitative. It was in vain that he insisted that in *Tannhäuser* song was declamation and declamation was song; it was not, indeed, until many years later, and after a good deal of exhausting exposition on his part, both in the theatre and in the Press, that he managed to bring the ordinary opera-singer round to his point of view.

In the matter of the dramatic conception of the various parts he had even more trouble, especially with the tenor, Tichatschek. This gentleman was a typical operatic " star " tenor. He was an excellent fellow, if not particularly intelligent, had a fine presence and a big and brilliant voice, and was the idol of the Dresden public. He had already made a great success in *Rienzi.* But first and foremost he was a singer, in a much less degree an actor, and very little at all of a thinker; his main idea was to have brilliant arias to sing and to sing them brilliantly, and to prance about in magnificent costumes.

Tichatschek had the greatest admiration for the young Wagner, and would willingly have done anything for him that was in his power; the sole trouble was that he had not brains enough to understand Wagner's new dramatic ideals. For one thing, his voice, while of an extraordinarily stirring quality in brilliant and joyous music, had little capacity for expressing suffering or the darker emotions generally. He made a tremendous effect in the closing moments of the first act of *Tannhäuser,* and the audience was so enthusiastic that the success of the opera appeared assured. In the second act, however — the act that is crucial for the drama — he failed Wagner completely.

From the dramatic point of view, the culminating point of the second act is Tannhäuser's phrase in the great finale, " To lead the sinner to salvation, the heaven-sent messenger drew near." Wagner tells us that Tichatschek had not intelligence enough to perceive the importance of this phrase and to impress the meaning of

it upon the audience. The first result of his deficiency of understanding was that the second act fell flat. The second and even more serious result was that Wagner felt compelled, in view of Tichatschek's fiasco, to omit this passage from the second performance; and as his motives in doing so were not generally understood, it was taken for granted that this was just an ordinary " cut," and it became the practice everywhere to omit the passage from future performances.

How little Tichatschek understood of the dramatic significance of his part may be estimated from the fact that in the Contest scene in the Hall of Song, when, forgetting his present highly respectable surroundings, his mind reverts to the Hörselberg and he bursts out with a passionate invocation to Venus and sensual love, he actually moved towards Elisabeth and poured his unholy raptures into *her* chaste ears! The good fellow's mental processes were very simple. Was he not the leading tenor, and was not Elisabeth the leading lady? To whom, then, if not to the leading lady, should the tenor address himself in his big moment?

The Venus was Wilhelmine Schroeder-Devrient, the greatest German dramatic singer of her epoch, but at this period rather past her best, both vocally and physically. She had been quick to distinguish the exceptional genius of Wagner some years before, and had willingly done all she could to help him forward. She was conscious that Venus was hardly a part for her, and she seems to have undertaken it, in some measure, only for a sense of its importance to the dramatic scheme and a consequent desire to help Wagner all she could at a critical point in his career.

Wagner himself was conscious that the part of Venus had not been developed in the opera at sufficient length, a defect which he rectified in the 1861 production of *Tannhäuser* in Paris. The part could only have been made thoroughly effective in the first days by a singer who was wholly absorbed in it, and this, for various reasons, chiefly connected with her physical appearance, Schroeder-Devrient found it impossible to be. " The only thing," says Wagner in his autobiography, " that might have helped to achieve the effect I had desired in the part of Venus would have been the ac-

tress's confidence in her own youthful beauty, and in the purely sensuous appreciation of beauty of this kind by the audience. The conviction that these means of effect were no longer at her disposal paralysed this great artist, who was already becoming matronly in form. She necessarily felt somewhat embarrassed, and so was unable to employ her usual means for making her effects. On one occasion, with a despairing smile, she declared herself incapable of playing Venus, for the very simple reason that she could not wear a costume appropriate to that goddess. ' What in heaven's name am I to wear as Venus? ' she said. ' After all, I cannot go on in just a girdle! I should look like something at a fancy ball! ' " Her fears and Wagner's proved only too well founded; the inability of Schroeder-Devrient to carry through the part of Venus had a good deal to do with the comparative coolness of the audience at the first performance.

The Elisabeth was Wagner's niece Johanna Wagner, who was physically well adapted for the part, with her youthful appearance and her tall and slender figure; she also, at that time, had an exceedingly good voice. She had been well coached by the composer, and succeeded so well in the part that it may be said to have laid the foundation of her future great reputation. Even with her, however, he had something of the same difficulty as with Tichatschek. She could not render the prayer in the third act as he wished it to be done, with the result that in future performances he had to make a considerable cut in it.

The Wolfram was Mitterwurzer, an intelligent young baritone with a good voice. He was thoroughly willing to carry out Wagner's intentions, and the composer was surprised to find that even a man of his gifts had some difficulty in grasping the true nature of his part. At the rehearsals he sang Wolfram's song in the Contest scene so dryly and mechanically that it was evident to Wagner that he regarded it merely as a piece of the old conventional recitative. When Wagner pointed out his error to him, Mitterwurzer begged to be allowed to work the thing out quietly in his own way; and this he did with such success that it was through his impersonation of Wolfram that the Dresden public gradually came to

understand the dramatic significance of the new work, so far as they could understand it at all.

The first performance, on the 19th October, 1845 (under Wagner himself, of course), was only moderately successful, and Wagner was greatly depressed after it. He was ready enough to perceive that most of his singers were, in this degree or that, answerable for the comparative failure, but he was less willing to acknowledge that his own incurable long-windedness may also have had something to do with it. He saw, however, the necessity of making considerable cuts for the second performance, though he complained that they deprived the dramatic action of a good deal of its meaning. One reason for the partial non-success of the new opera was that it was in a style different from what the town had come to expect from the composer of *Rienzi* and *The Flying Dutchman*. Another reason was that religious controversy was in the air in Germany at that time, and the story became current that just as Meyerbeer in *The Huguenots* had glorified Protestantism, so, in *Tannhäuser*, Wagner's intention had been to glorify Catholicism. He was even accused in some quarters of having been bribed by the Catholic party!

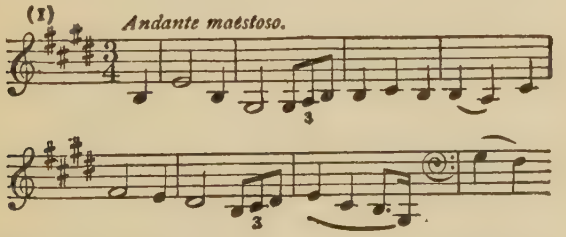
The second performance took place a week after the first, Tichatschek having in the interval been too hoarse to sing again for some days. The new scenery for the Hall of Song had now arrived, and Wagner was very pleased with it; but unfortunately at the second performance the house was nearly empty. But somehow or other word must have gone round the town that the unfavourable opinion of the audience at the first production needed modifying, and the third performance was given before a full house. From that time its success was virtually assured, though in his inmost heart Wagner felt that the public approval was mostly for the music, instead of for the drama, which he himself regarded as of even greater importance.

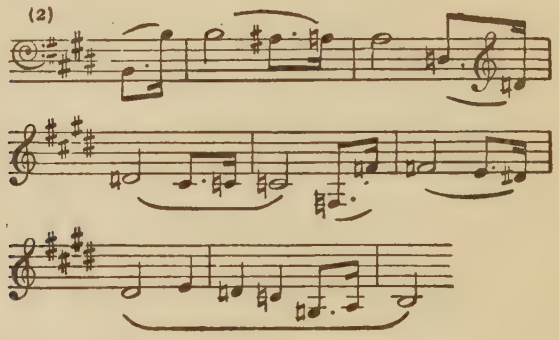
For many years he had a hard fight of it to get the average German opera-singer to see that before the question of the singing of the music came the question of understanding the dramatic psy-

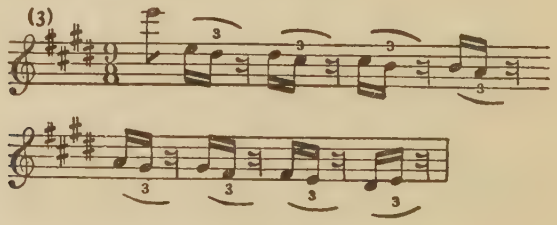
chology of the character. In 1852 he wrote an exhaustive treatise on *The Performing of Tannhäuser,* in which he gave singers and stage directors the minutest instructions as to the proper conception of the work. He had two hundred copies of the booklet printed, and sent a copy to every opera-house in Germany. Some years after, being without a copy himself and wanting one for a special purpose, he asked the Vienna Opera to send him theirs. When he received it, it was still uncut.

In the first version of the opera, in the scene of Tannhäuser's frenzy in the third act, Venus did not appear in person, but her malign influence upon Tannhäuser was suggested by a rosy glow on the distant Hörselberg. Nor was the death of Elisabeth positively announced; it was merely conveyed to the audience by the sound of funeral bells in the distance, along with the faint light of torches on the Wartburg. It was apparently as the result of a suggestion from Mitterwurzer that he altered this latter scene to allow of the body of Elisabeth being brought in; while his desire for greater visual definiteness in the stage action — a desire that was always strong in him — led him to bring Venus on in person in the scene immediately preceding this.

The overture to *Tannhäuser,* like the overtures of Wagner's predecessor and model Weber, employs the main themes of the opera to summarise the dramatic action; but Wagner raises this form of overture to a height of which Weber probably never dreamed.

The overture opens with the theme of Salvation by Grace:

The theme has a decidedly religious character, that comes not merely from its melody and harmony but from the peculiar colour

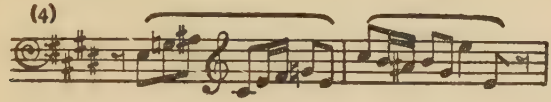
given to it by its being set for wind instruments alone — clarinets, bassoons, and horns. It is succeeded by the motive of Repentance: [2]

Wagner discourses upon these two themes with his usual deliberation, the Salvation motive being given out fortissimo by practically the whole orchestra (the trumpets not being used, however; he is reserving these for the final climax), and the violins playing round the melody with an excited figure of broken triplets that is meant to symbolize the Pulse of Life:

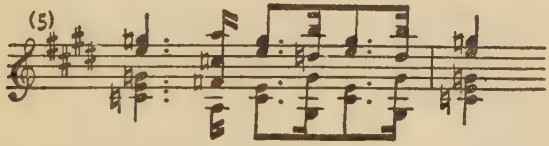


The passion gradually dies away, and we hear once more, in quiet tones, the opening theme (No. 1) in the same church-like colouring as before. This time its development is abruptly interrupted

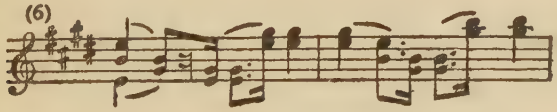
[2] The reader must always bear in mind that the titles affixed to the motives in Wagner's operas are for the most part not his own but those of his commentators. The general sense of a particular motive is unmistakable, but it occasionally happens that different commentators call it by different names.

by the first of the themes associated with the Bacchanalian revels in the kingdom of Venus:

(4)

This motive makes its feverish way upwards in the violas. It is succeeded almost immediately by a second Bacchanal theme:

(5)

and this by a third, given out at first in the soft tones of the flutes, oboes, and clarinets.

(6)

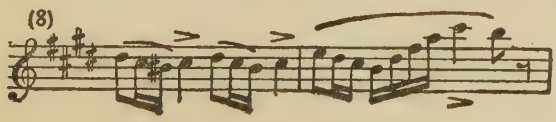


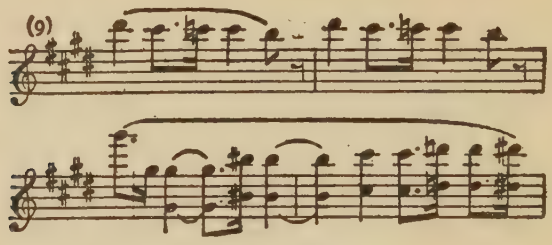
This last is more particularly associated with the Sirens, and it is completed by another hectic theme:

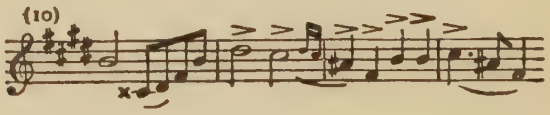
(7)

No. 5 may be regarded as the Sirens' call to pleasure. After repetitions of No. 4, now expanded by the addition of a new figure:

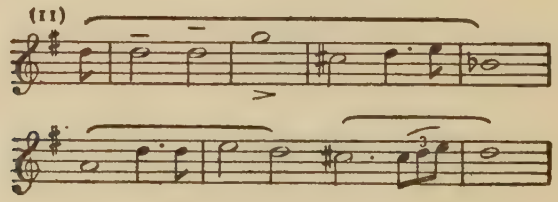
(8)



we hear yet another Bacchanal motive

which leads into the theme of the Glorification of Venus; it is to this latter melody that Tannhäuser, in the first act, sings of his passion for the goddess:



Further development of the various Bacchanal themes brings us to a fresh motive, given out with insidious quietness by the clarinet, under soft, seductive tremolandi in the violins:



This motive symbolises the Charm of Venus; it is to this strain that the goddess, finding Tannhäuser likely to escape from his prison, tries once more to cast her full spell over him.

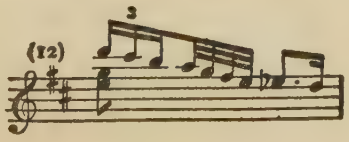
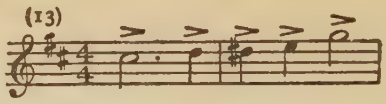
Again the Bacchanal themes are resumed, and culminate, as before, in the song of Tannhäuser to Venus (No. 10).

In the original version of the overture this led in time to a resumption of No. 1 in the full orchestra, with No. 3 playing about

it as before, the poetic idea being the final triumph of spiritual over fleshly love. For the Paris performance of the opera in 1861, however, Wagner revised and expanded the overture from the point we have now reached.

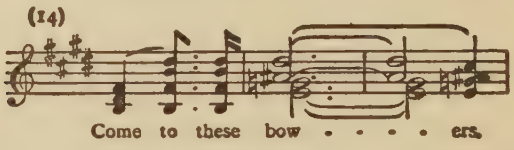
At the Paris Opera in those days a ballet in the second act was *de rigueur;* it had to be in the second act so that late diners who were not intellectually interested in the first act of an opera could arrive in time for the ballet. Wagner, incredible as it may seem to us to-day, was asked by the management to comply with this absurd rule. He flatly refused, of course, as the dramatic evolution of Tannhäuser gives no opportunity for a conventional ballet in the second act; but as a partial concession to the public, and also, we may take it, because he liked the Bacchanal music and felt he could now do rather more with it than he had done at first, he consented to expand the musical development at this point, so that it could be associated, if not with the ordinary ballet, at any rate with seductive stage pictures and posings that would at once placate the French lovers of ballet and serve to make the voluptuous attractions of the Court of Venus more convincing.

It is hardly necessary to say that the average Parisian patrons of opera were *not* placated; indeed, Wagner's blunt refusal to fall in with their wishes had a good deal to do with the blackguardly opposition to his opera that was gradually worked up in certain quarters. The added portion is now usually known as the New Venusberg Music — sometimes also as the Bacchanal. We will now describe the course taken by the new overture from the point at which we have left the old.

After playing for a while with motives Nos. 4 and 8, Wagner proceeds to develop the already familiar Bacchanal themes with a freedom and passion of which he was incapable in 1845, and two new themes are added to them:

(13)

The latter has a touch of *Tristan* about it; and indeed the whole of the New Venusberg Music suggests *Tristan* rather than the *Tannhäuser* of sixteen years earlier.

The music rises to a height of voluptuousness that has probably never been surpassed in any other work of any composer, then dies down gradually and merges into the Call of the Sirens:

(14)



In the theatre this is sung (to the words " Come to these bowers ") by an invisible chorus of female voices; in the concert arrangement it is given to the strings alone.

The most exquisite melodies and harmonies are developed out of this and the material already familiar, and the passion of the music gradually dies away into a sort of quietly ecstatic contentment.

In the Paris version of the opera, which is now the one generally played in the larger theatres, the curtain rises at the point where the old overture merges into the New Venusberg Music. The stage represents the interior of the Venusberg — a wide grotto that curves away in the background until it seems to be lost in the distance. A waterfall plunges through an opening in the rocks and forms a lake in which Naiads are seen bathing, while Sirens recline on the banks. In front of the grotto Venus is seen reclining on a rich couch, bathed in a soft, rosy half-light; Tannhäuser half kneels before her with his head in her lap, his harp by his side. The Three Graces group themselves round the couch. Sleeping Cupids are huddled at the side of and behind the couch " like children who, tired after play, have fallen asleep " — to quote

Wagner's own description. While the orchestra pours out its delirious music, Satyrs, Fauns, Nymphs, and pursuing Youths fill the stage with movement.

At the point where the chorus of Sirens is heard (No. 14), the mist in the background dissolves, showing a cloud-picture of the Rape of Europa by the white bull, escorted by Tritons and Nereids. During the second song of the Sirens, Leda is seen in the soft light of the moon reclining on the banks of a woodland lake, with the swan laying his head on her bosom. As this picture gradually fades away, the mist itself completely disappears, showing the grotto empty except for Tannhäuser, Venus, and the Three Graces; the latter make a smiling obeisance to the goddess and slowly depart.

As we have said, Wagner elaborated considerably the opening scene of the opera for the Paris production of 1861; his object was to develop psychologically the part of Venus, to emphasize her power over the more sensual side of Tannhäuser's nature, and so to give more interest to his struggle to free himself from her chains.

When the last traces of the Bacchanal have faded away, the knight raises his head suddenly from the lap of Venus, as if wakening from a dream; she draws him back caressingly, to the strain (in the orchestra) of the Sirens' song (No. 14). He passes his hand across his eyes, as if trying to recall and fix the dream. To her question, "Beloved, say, where strays thy thought?" he replies convulsively, "No more, no more!" and then, more slowly and softly, cries, "Oh that I now might waken." [3]

Venus as yet has no suspicion that her hold upon him is weakening. Still caressing him she asks him to tell her what is in his thoughts. He answers that in his dream he has heard again in imagination what has long been strange to his ears — the joyous sound of bells. (A suggestion of faintly tinkling bells is given by the flute and oboe reiterating a sort of chime over a sequence

[3] In one of the older English versions this was mistranslated "Oh that I *ne'er* might waken" — an unfortunate perversion of Tannhäuser's real sentiments.

of descending harmonies in the strings.) "How long is it," he asks, "since I heard their tones?" Venus tries to soothe him by passing her hand gently over his brow. He continues wistfully: "I know not how to measure the time I've dwelt here with thee. Of days and months I have lost count, for no longer do I see the sun, nor the friendly stars above; no longer do I see the tender grass, with its promise of summer; no longer do I hear the nightingale telling me that spring is nigh. Shall I never see and hear these again?"

Venus, still serenely sure of herself and of her empire over him, reminds him, in a tone of quiet astonishment, of how she had brought balm to his sufferings, and bids him take his harp and sing once more the praises of love, as in the days when by his singing he made the Goddess of Love herself his own. Tannhäuser, moved by a sudden resolution, takes the harp from her and sings, to the melody of No. 10, of all her bounties to him. But soon the old sadness, the old nostalgia, creeps across his soul again. He longs to return to the world of men; it is not alone the pleasures of the Venusberg that he desires, he says, but the pains and sorrows of humanity, and he implores his enchantress to set him free. Venus herself now begins to waken to a sense of the reality of the situation. She reproaches him gently: in what has her love been lacking that he should grieve her thus?

Once more Tannhäuser breaks into song in praise of her love and of the delights of her kingdom, and once more he ends with a cry of yearning for the ordinary world of men, for the flowers, the meadows fresh with dew, the sound of bells, the song of birds; and again he begs her to set him free. At this, Venus springs from her couch and upbraids him passionately for his ingratitude and inconsistency: he "praises love, and yet from love would flee?" Is he sated with the joys she has showered on him? He tries to justify himself: it is from her too powerful charm that he would fly; never has he loved her more truly than now, when he must leave her for ever.

At this point in the original version of the score, Venus directs on him at once the full battery of her seductiveness. In the Paris

version, the dramatist and the musician in Wagner, both ripened by the years, take better care that the most is made of this crucial moment. Venus buries her face in her hands and turns away from him with a cry of dismay. There is a long silence, both on the stage and in the orchestra: Wagner always knew the value of silence in the theatre in moments of tragic intensity. Then the orchestra launches out into a soft and sweetly seductive strain that might have come out of *Tristan*. While this music is unfolding itself, Venus attracts Tannhäuser's glance to her again, and turns suddenly to him with a ravishing smile. She makes a sign and a magic grotto appears, filled with rosy perfumed vapours. (In the original version she merely speaks of the grotto as being visible to Tannhäuser.) She points to it and invites him to enter it with her. The music here is in essence the same as in the Dresden version. The vocal melody is the one already heard in the overture (No. 11); the orchestral accompaniment, however, is now much richer and more elaborate.

As she draws nearer to him, an invisible chorus of Sirens sings "Come to these bowers" to the melody of No. 14; but the phrase is now sung only once, instead of twice, as in the first version of the opera. In place of the old repetition, Venus herself takes up the Sirens' strain, and, to the accompaniment of some of the music that appears for the first time in the 1861 Bacchanal, bids him come where he shall "drink draughts divine, drink deep of love's own wine," from her lips and her eyes. The music becomes more and more languorously seductive as it proceeds, and at last dies away almost to inaudibility as Venus whispers, "Say, dearest friend, tell me, beloved, wilt thou fly from me?"

Wagner's instinct in making this long interpolation was a sound one: it came from a keener sense of dramatic effect than he had when he drafted his poem in 1843. In the version of that year Tannhäuser succumbs again too quickly. He has already sung his song in praise of love twice; there is a touch of the ineffective in making him sing it a third time almost immediately after the second.

By prolonging the intermediate scene, Wagner in the first place

postpones the third stanza of the song till we have had time to forget the second, and so, on the third recurrence of the melody, it comes to us again with most of its original force; and in the second place, by interposing this long and passionate appeal of Venus the dramatist makes us realise how serious is the contest in Tannhäuser's soul between desire for the goddess and the longing to be free of her. Like him, we find her appeal irresistible, and so we are not surprised when once more, " completely carried away," as the stage directions put it, he seizes his harp and breaks again into a song of adoration of Venus that is even more passionate than its predecessors. Yet, in spite of all his protestations that while life is in him he will be her " true and fearless champion," the old longing for the cool sweetness of earth masters him once more; freedom he must have, strife and battle in the world of men, even though death be the end of it all.

The remainder of the scene follows, in the Paris version, the general lines of the earlier one, but the dramatic motive, as before, is extended, and the music made much richer. In the original, Venus in anger bids him go back to the cold and loveless world of men, where disappointment will soon drive him back to her

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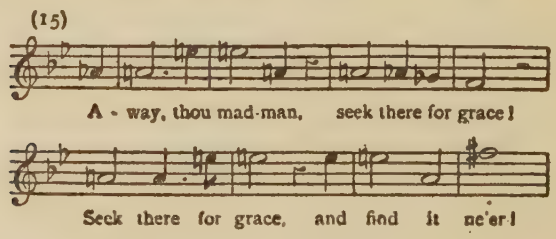


arms. In the later version, Wagner, in some pages that once more remind us of *Tristan,* enlarges upon this idea. He has scorned men, she reminds him, flouted them by coming to her; what reception will they give him when he returns? Their hatred and derision will send him back to her; in faint, dull tones she sings for him, in anticipation, the words, expressive of utter weariness and humiliation, in which he will then plead with her to grant him her

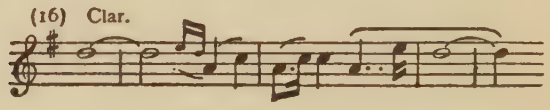
favour again. He will lie upon her threshold, and beg now not for love but for pity, and she will spurn him like a beggar: " not to slaves, only to heroes, open I my door! "

But cajoleries and threats are now equally vain. " No," replies Tannhäuser; " my pride that last distress shall spare thee, to see me kneeling in dishonour; for he who now leaves thee, oh goddess, will never more return." Here is the opportunity, which Wagner at once seizes, for a further elaboration of the psychology of the situation. Womanlike, Venus at once undergoes a revulsion of feeling. From the scorner she becomes the suppliant. His threat to leave her for ever breaks down her pride; and to some of the loveliest, most insinuating music in the whole scene she reminds him of their happiness together, and pleads with him not to inflict on her the last pain of all — to hear him, in the other life, lamenting, and not be able to bring him solace as of old. But instantly upon this comes another change of mood. If he does not return, she cries despairingly, her curse will be on him and on the world: " the earth shall be a desert when the goddess smiles on it no more."

Tannhäuser answers that he well knows that he who flies from her leaves all grace behind him, but tells her once again that it is combat, not the soft joys of the Venusberg, for which his soul now longs, and that he understands that it is towards death that his new desire is imperiously driving him. " When even death flies from thee," she pleads, " and the grave itself is closed to thee, then return to me! " " But it is here in my heart," says Tannhäuser, " that I bear death and the grave! Through repentance and penance alone shall I find rest "; and then, to the goddess's last frenzied appeal to return to her if he would be saved, he cries, " Goddess of all delights! No, not with thee shall my soul find peace! My hope is in Mary alone! " In the original version the stage directions are that " Venus shrinks away with a cry, and vanishes." In the Paris version she simply disappears, and the scene at once changes.

Tannhäuser has not altered his position, but we now see him in a beautiful valley, with a blue sky and bright sunshine. In the

background, to the right, the Wartburg is visible; through an opening in the valley on the left the Hörselberg can be seen. To the right a mountain path runs down from the Wartburg, turning aside in the foreground, where, on a slight eminence, there stands a shrine to the Virgin. From the heights on the left, sheep-bells are heard; on a cliff sits a young shepherd with his pipe, which he is now playing upon as the curtain rises:



He sings a simple little melody in praise of Holda, the old German goddess of goodness, kindness, and grace, whose yearly coming brought prosperity to the land.

Wagner's intentions here are almost too subtle for ordinary theatrical comprehension. Holda, he tells us in his treatise on the poem of *Tannhäuser,* was, like other of the heathen gods, banished into the interior of the earth at the coming of Christianity, and from a beneficent deity she came to be regarded as an evil one. She now figured as a symbol of rather wild pleasure, and in fact became identified in time with Venus, the source of all the evils of the senses, and was supposed to have her habitation in the Hörselberg. Wagner, therefore, by making the unsophisticated shepherd sing of Holda and the coming of May, seems to be impressing on us that what was Venus to Tannhäuser in the days when he was enslaved by his senses in the Hörselberg is the sweet and beneficent Holda now that he has come to himself again in the pure air of the valley.

In his autobiography Wagner tells us that while he was sketching out the plan of the opera at Töplitz, in the summer of 1842, he one day climbed the Wostrai (the highest peak in the neighbourhood), where, on turning the corner of a valley, he heard a merry dance-tune whistled by a goatherd perched on a crag. Wagner seemed to see himself at once among the Pilgrims of his opera, filing past the goatherd in the valley below. He made

a mental note of the situation, but not of the tune, so that when he came to compose the opera he had, as he humourously says, " to help myself out of the matter in the usual way ":

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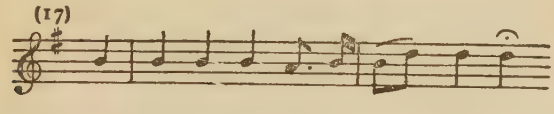
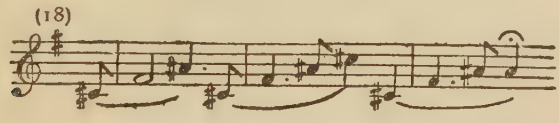
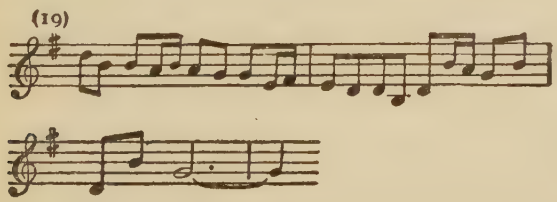

In the Dresden version the shepherd's song was continuous. In the Paris version he inserts in the middle of it another little strain on the pipe:

(18)



(which reminds us slightly of more than one motive in the *Ring*). When the song is over, the final words being " Now on my pipe I merrily play, For May is here, the lovely May! " the boy indulges in a lively final flourish on his instrument:

(19)



Almost simultaneously there is heard the song of the elder Pilgrims as they come down the mountain path from the Wartburg; and between each of the lines of their song the shepherd boy continues for a time to develop his merry fantasia, which is always in a faster tempo than that of the choral song.

The Pilgrims' chorus is in four parts (two tenors and two basses), and commences thus:

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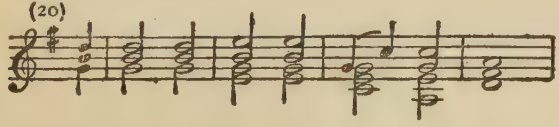


After the fourth line the shepherd ceases his piping and listens reverently to the hymn, in which the Pilgrims speak of their journey to Rome, there to implore pardon for their sins. The second part of their strain, to which they sing the words:

"My heart is sad, by sins oppressed,
No longer can it bear its burden;
My weary feet shall take no rest
Until the Lord shall grant me pardon,"

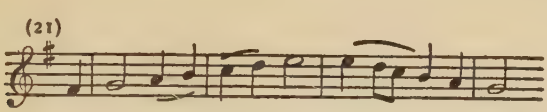
to a melody that has already been heard in the overture (No. 2), though now, like the rest of the hymn, it is in common instead of three-four time.

As the Pilgrims reach the height opposite to that on which he is sitting, the shepherd waves his cap and calls out to them, "Good speed! Good speed to Rome! There for my soul, oh! ask a blessing!" Tannhäuser, all this while, has remained in the centre of the stage as if rooted there. Now at last his emotion finds voice; deeply moved, he sinks on his knees and utters a great cry: "Almighty God be praised! Great are the marvels of His mercy!" It is one of the electrifying moments of the score; even at this early stage of his development Wagner had an infallible sense of where to place his climaxes, and how to get them with the simplest possible means.

The Pilgrims turn up the path that runs by the shrine, and slowly pass off the stage, still singing their hymn, which, formerly unaccompanied, now has a running accompaniment in the plucked violas and cellos, while the shepherd again pipes his little tune, which also gradually recedes into the distance. Where the last of the Pilgrims has disappeared from the stage, Tannhäuser, on his knees, sunk in prayer, takes up the second strain of the hymn (No. 2) to the same words as theirs. Then tears choke his voice, and he is unable to finish the phrase, which is taken up for the last time by the Pilgrims, now very far away. Tannhäuser bows his head low and appears to weep bitterly; and from the background, as it were from Eisenach, comes

the distant chiming of bells. The last phrase of the Pilgrims' hymn:

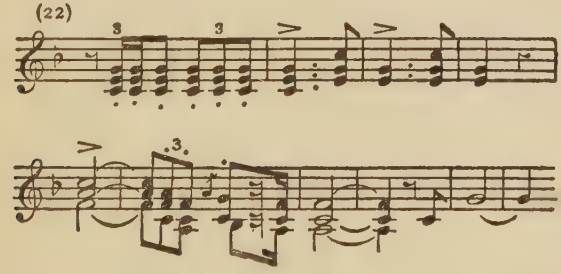
(21)



deserves to rank as a separate motive; it symbolises the Steadfastness of Faith, and is sung each time to the words, " Oh, blest is he whose faith is sure."

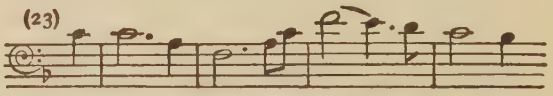
Just before the hymn finally dies away, a solitary note on a hunting-horn is heard in the distance; this develops into a joyous fanfare for the horns (behind the scenes, and still in the distance):

(22)



This develops and draws nearer, until at last the Landgrave of Thuringia and his Minstrels, in hunting array, come one by one along a path from the eminence on the left. Half-way down the height the Landgrave perceives the kneeling Tannhäuser. All wonder who he can be — a penitent they assume, but, from his appearance, obviously a knight. Wolfram, Tannhäuser's closest friend of old, is the first to hasten towards him and to recognise him with a cry of " 'Tis Henry! " The cry is taken up by them all. Tannhäuser rises in astonishment, quickly collects himself, and bows to the Landgrave without speaking, after having thrown a swift glance on the Minstrels; he is apparently not sure of the kind of reception he will have, for he has left their company, as the libretto tells us, " in haughty pride." The Landgrave and the others ask him if he has really returned to them at last,

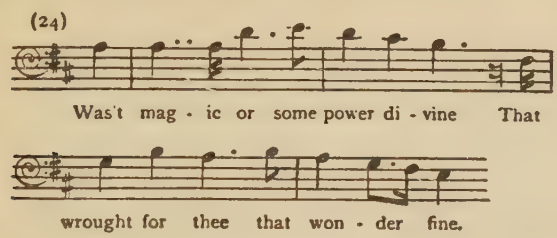
and what the return portends; the grim Biterolf demands bluntly whether he is friendly or "dreams of further strife"; Walther von der Vogelweide also asks, "Com'st thou as friend or foe?" The gentle Wolfram protests against their harshness: is Tannhäuser's demeanor, he asks, that of pride? He approaches the knight with a friendly air and extends a welcome to him; too long, he says, has Tannhäuser been absent from their midst:

(23)

Wolfram's friendliness finds an immediate echo in the others, and at last the Landgrave himself bids Tannhäuser welcome, but would know where he has stayed so long. Tannhäuser, in a sort of dream, replies, "I've wandered in a distant, distant land, where never could I rest nor solace find. Ask not! To strive with you I came not here; let it be reconciliation between us, and then let me go my way." To their combined appeal to him to stay he answers again that he can nowhere find rest; he is doomed to wander on for ever; he dare not look behind him.

But all their urgency is of no avail: the more insistent their appeal, the harder becomes his resolution, until out of the ensemble there comes a clear cry from Wolfram, standing in front of Tannhäuser, "Stay for Elisabeth!" The name sets all the old memories stirring in Tannhäuser; deeply and yet joyfully agitated, he stands as if spellbound, repeating in ecstacy the word "Elisabeth!" that seems to him to have reached him from heaven. With the permission of the Landgrave, Wolfram thereupon tells him how, when he dwelt among them and contended with them for the prizes of song, his singing won for him the greatest prize of all — the love of Elisabeth. The heartfelt second strain of the song is typical of Wagner's melody of this period

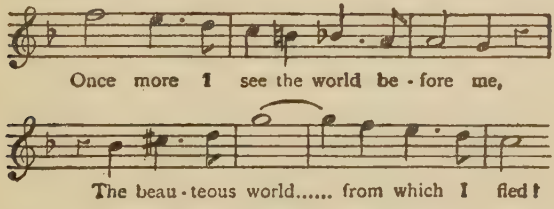
at its best, and is a full revelation of the character, sincere, affectionate, and earnest, of Wolfram:

(24)



Since Tannhäuser has left them, says Wolfram, Elisabeth has pined away, and has been seen no more at the Contests of Song. Wolfram urges him to return among them and take part again in their friendly rivalries, and his strain is taken up and developed by the rest of the Minstrels in a sonorous piece of choral writing. Tannhäuser's pride can resist no longer; profoundly moved, he throws himself into Wolfram's arms, greets each of the Minstrels in turn, and bows to the Landgrave in deep gratitude. "To her! To her!" he cries — "oh, lead me to her!" and the Minstrels break out into a joyous chorus, in which Tannhäuser joins with a jubilant melody that will be heard again in a later scene:

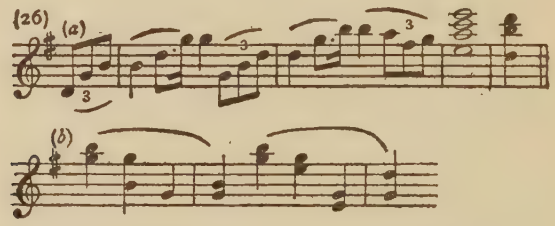
(25)



By this time the whole of the hunting retinue of the Landgrave has come upon the scene, and the hunters add merry horn fanfares to the voice parts. The Landgrave sounds his horn, he and the Minstrels mount the horses that have been brought them

from the Wartburg, and the curtain falls. (That, at least, is how Wagner desired the scene to close; his intentions cannot always be realised to the letter in our theatres.)

The second act commences with a long orchestral prelude of a type that Wagner may be said to have originated in the theatre. It is a sort of miniature symphonic poem. First of all a vigorous, leaping theme, with a dancing pendant

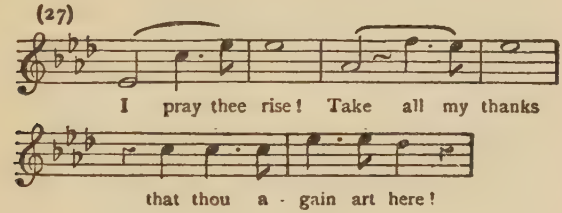


describes the felicity of Elisabeth. It is succeeded by the " Jubilation " motive, which, quoted as No. 25, we have already heard from Tannhäuser's lips in the preceding scene. The development of these sunny motives is interrupted for a moment when, in the dark tones of the wood-wind, the " Warning " motive casts a shadow over the music. This is the motive shown as No. 15; it is to this that Venus has sung her admonition to Tannhäuser in the first scene. But the shadow soon passes, and No. 25 is heard again in all its brilliance as the curtain rises, showing the Hall of Song in the Wartburg; in the background is a view of the courtyard and the valley.

Elisabeth enters joyfully, with springing steps, and sings her greeting to the Hall of Song. Tannhäuser has returned, once more his songs will echo through the Hall, and joy is in her heart again. The aria pulsates with a vitality that must have acted like a tonic, even an intoxicant, on the audiences that heard it for the first time eighty years or so ago: there was nothing else in contemporary music to set beside it for vigour and brilliance. When it is over, Tannhäuser conducted by Wolfram, descends the stairs and appears in the background. He throws himself at Elisabeth's feet, while the tactful Wolfram remains discreetly remote from

them, leaning against the wall. Elisabeth is at first all modest confusion. She bids Tannhäuser rise from his knees; her melody is typical of Wagner at this period, especially in its use of the "turn":

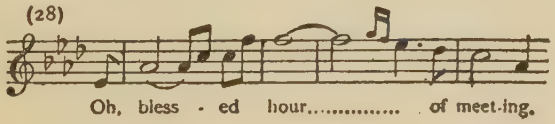
(27)



"But where," she asks him, "hast thou wandered so long?" Tannhäuser rises, and in veiled tones, as if trying in vain to recall a dream, tells her he has been "far from her, in distant, distant regions; a dark oblivious cloud 'twixt to-day and yesterday has rolled." Memory of it all has vanished; one thing only can he recall, that he had lost all hope that he should ever see her again. It is some "wonder" that has brought him back, "a mighty and mysterious wonder." "I praise this wonder," Elisabeth rejoins, "from the depth of my heart."

With delicate art Wagner paints for us the conflict of emotions in her breast — her innocent joy in Tannhäuser's return, her sadness at his departure and long absence, her maidenly inability to comprehend all the varied emotions she is now feeling; at the finish the cry is wrung from her, "Henry, Henry! What hast thou done to me?" It is the god of love, declares Tannhäuser, that has brought him back; and the pair break out into a joyous duet, commencing thus:

(28)



and continuing with a strain in which we see once more Wagner's use of his beloved "turn":

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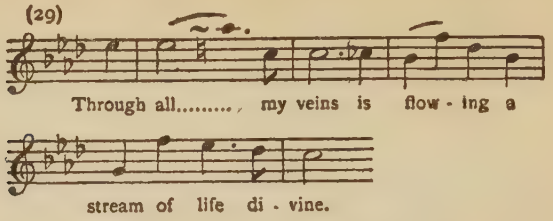
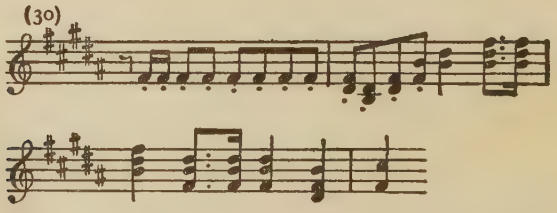


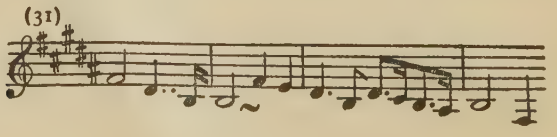
The section devoted to an elaboration of this last theme was greatly admired by Mendelssohn; it was one of the few things in *Tannhäuser* that really pleased him.

At the conclusion of this long duet, Tannhäuser leaves Elisabeth, rushes to Wolfram and embraces him warmly, and the two disappear by the staircase, Elisabeth gazing after them from the balcony. From a side-passage the Landgrave now enters; Elisabeth hastens to him and buries her face in his breast. The grave and benevolent Landgrave has read his niece's secret, but he refrains from urging her to speak of it.

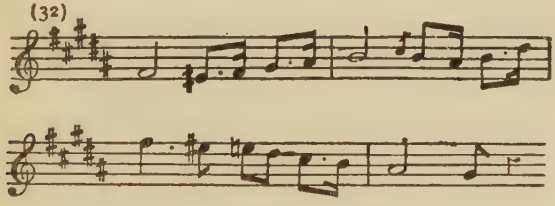
Trumpets sound a fanfare far away in the castle yard, summoning the Minstrels and the rest of the company to the Contest of Song:

(30)

The Landgrave and Elisabeth ascend the balcony and receive the guests — Knights and Ladies — each pair being announced by four noble Pages, the orchestra the while developing No. 30 into an imposing Processional March, with the following as its main theme:

(31)

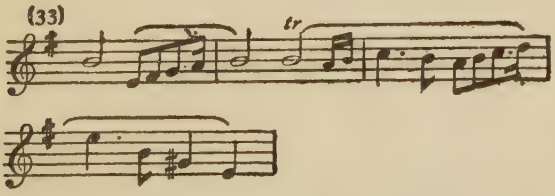


(Note again the " turn.") At the climax, when most of the guests have been received, trumpets on the stage peal out once more with No. 30, and the Knights and Nobles sing, to the strain of No. 31, a greeting to the noble Hall in which they find themselves, and to their beloved ruler, patron of the arts, the good Landgrave Hermann of Thuringia. The Ladies take up the second strain:



the male voices answer them, and finally the whole of the forces unite in the song of praise.

The Minstrels now step forward, bow to the assembly with great dignity, and take their seats, which are arranged in a narrow semicircle in the centre of the Hall. Tannhäuser is in the middle, to the right: Wolfram at the end, to the left. The orchestra gives out, in quiet tones, a kind of ceremonial music, commencing thus:



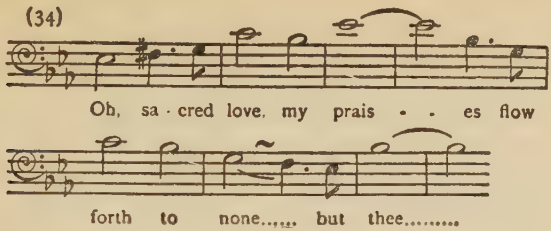
and when this has been concluded, the Landgrave rises and addresses the assembly. He reminds them of their services to the land in war, and their no less worthy services to it in the arts of peace, especially that of song. The return of Tannhäuser shall be celebrated in another friendly contest as of old. The secret of his going and returning has not yet been disclosed; perhaps

it will be revealed in song. To this end he proposes, as the theme of their contest, the nature of Love; the Minstrel who can most truly show this forth will be allowed to claim his own reward from the hands of Elisabeth.

The four noble Pages come forward and take from each Minstrel a small roll of paper bearing his name: these they place in a golden bowl, which they present to Elisabeth; she draws a roll out and hands it to the Pages, who read out the name on it. This ceremony is accompanied by the orchestra with the music based on the theme quoted as No. 33. The Pages advance into the middle of the stage, read out the name of Wolfram von Eschinbach, and then seat themselves at the feet of the Landgrave and Elisabeth. Tannhäuser, lost in dreams, leans upon his harp.

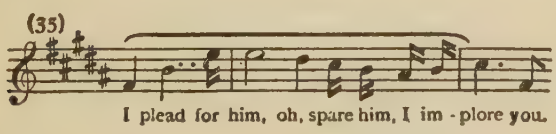
Wolfram rises and sings an austere song in praise of spiritual, undeclared, unselfish love: it is clear that from afar he worships Elisabeth. The assembly approves the song. Tannhäuser seems to awake from his dream: his expression changes from one of gloomy pride to one of ecstasy. He stares into vacancy, and a convulsive shudder passes through him: he has become oblivious of his surroundings, even of Elisabeth.

Wagner revised the scene at this point in the later version. In the original opera, Tannhäuser breaks into a preliminary song in praise of love — or rather desire, as he conceives it. Walther von der Vogelweide rises and reproves him for confusing love with unhallowed passion, and Tannhäuser taunts him with never having tasted love. In the new version Walther's song is omitted, and Tannhäuser's two outbursts are compressed into one — a rapturous eulogy of sensual delights. There is general consternation. Elisabeth is astonished and perplexed; the grim, uncompromising Biterolf starts to his feet, angrily denounces Tannhäuser, and defies him to mortal combat for his blasphemy. The protest only serves to raise Tannhäuser's temperature. He defies and insults Biterolf, who draws his sword. The Landgrave bids Biterolf contain himself, and the gentle Wolfram sings again in praise of ideal love:

(34)

But by this time Tannhäuser's mind is back again in the courts of Venus. To the strains of No. 13 he lauds her as the source of all light and joy, and finally tells the Knights that if they would know what love is, let them "swift to the hill of Venus fly." The assembly breaks up in horror; the Ladies leave the Hall in dismay — all except Elisabeth, who, deadly pale, masters herself by a great effort, supporting herself against one of the wooden pillars of the canopy of the throne. The Landgrave and the Knights form into a group; Tannhäuser remains alone at the extreme left, still sunk in his ecstatic dream. The Knights, in an agitated chorus, cry out for vengeance on the sinner who has dwelt with Venus, and are advancing upon Tannhäuser with drawn swords, when Elisabeth places herself between them. Shielding Tannhäuser with her own body, she asks them what wound they could inflict upon her, even unto death itself, that could compare with the wound that he has dealt her heart.

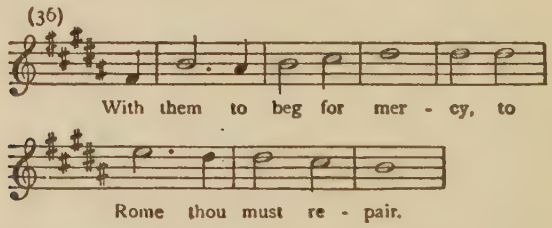
From this point the Act is one steadily rising climax. Elisabeth pleads with them to give the sinner a chance to repent and atone for his sin:

(35)



for was it not for such as he that the Redeemer died? The unholy fire has all this time been gradually dying out in Tannhäuser, and now, at these words of Elisabeth, he sinks down, overwhelmed

with contrition. " Woe! Woe! " he cries; " how have I sinned! " A softer mood comes upon the Knights. " An angel hath from heaven descended," they sing, " and God's most holy message brought. . . . Thou gavest her death. She pleadeth for thy pardon." Tannhäuser breaks out into a cry of remorse and appeals passionately to heaven for forgiveness. A magnificent choral climax is built up; when this has passed, the Landgrave steps solemnly into the centre of the stage, casts the sinner from among them, and tells him that one path alone is now open to him: a band of Pilgrims is on its way to Rome, and he must join them, and prostrate himself in penance at the feet of God. The Knights take up the exhortation:

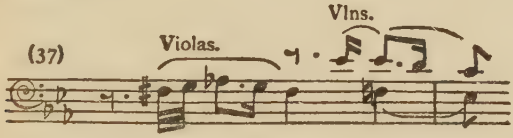


otherwise they will slay him at once. Through the turmoil are heard the voices of Tannhäuser, in an agony of remorse, and of Elisabeth, still interceding for him. This was the scene — the most vital one in the whole opera — in which Tichatschek failed so lamentably.

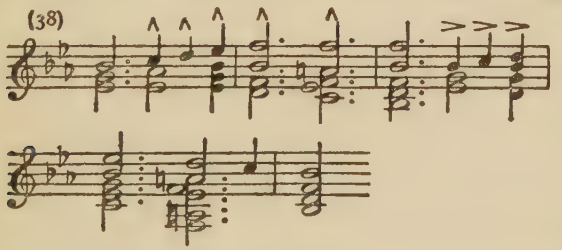
At the height of the tumult the Pilgrims' hymn is heard far away in the valley. All on the stage are involuntarily calmed, and listen in silence to the hymn. When it finally dies away in the distance, a ray of hope suddenly lights up Tannhäuser's face: he throws himself at Elisabeth's feet, convulsively kisses the hem of her robe, and then rises in the utmost agitation, cries out, " To Rome! " and rushes from the stage. They all call out " To Rome! " after him, and the curtain falls, the orchestra thundering out the motive of Atonement (No. 36).

The third act opens with a long orchestral introduction that bears the title, in the score of " Tannhäuser's Pilgrimage." This

opens with the theme of Penitence, taken from the Pilgrims' hymn (No. 14), which is answered by the motive of intercession, sung by Elisabeth during the final scene of the second Act (No. 35). The two dialogue for a while, and then we hear, in the violas, followed by the violins, what may be most conveniently referred to as the Brokenness motive, for it symbolises the mortal and physical collapse of Tannhäuser under the weight of his sin and his sufferings:



These three motives are skilfully woven together into one coherent tissue. Then comes the theme of Repentance (No. 2), and later other phrases from the Pilgrims' hymn (No. 37), also making itself heard from time to time. The strings give out the motive of the " Pulse of Life " (No. 3), which is interrupted twice by a new theme, that of Heavenly Grace:



given out with the full power of the brass. Later it is heard in greatly softened tones high up in the muted violins, and by slow steps it melts into a gently flowing single line in the 'cellos, to the accompaniment of which the curtain rises.

The scene is the valley in front of the Wartburg, as at the end of the first Act, except that now everything is in the colours of autumn. Evening is descending. On the slight eminence to the right Elisabeth is seen prostrate, praying before the shrine of the

Virgin. From the wooded heights on the left comes Wolfram; halfway down the descent he sees Elizabeth, and pauses. In deeply-felt accents he muses upon the sadness of her lot: always, when he wanders down from the heights of the valley, he is sure to find her here, deep in prayer for Tannhäuser, and daily expecting the return of the Pilgrims, who were to be home again when the leaves were sere. Will Tannhäuser be among them? "Oh, grant her prayer, ye saints in heaven! But if it may not be, if her wound may never heal, oh, grant her some solace."

Just as he is about to descend farther into the valley he pauses: he has heard, far off but gradually approaching, the Pilgrims singing the song of Salvation by Grace (No. 1), to words in which, with gladsome hearts, they greet the familiar and beloved scenes again. Their penance is complete, pardon has been won, and henceforth their pilgrims' staves can rest. The strain has reached Elisabeth's ear also: she raises herself and listens, and stammers out, between the phrases of the hymn, her hope that the saints will strengthen her for what she now has to do.

The Pilgrims, drawing nearer, continue with the motive of Repentance (No. 2), and at last come upon the stage from the right: still singing their gratitude to heaven, they pass slowly by the little eminence and down to the valley in the background, where they gradually disappear. It is the tradition among operatic sopranos that Elisabeth shall move along the line of the Pilgrims, scrutinising each face in turn in the hope of finding Tannhäuser's; but judging from the stage directions, Wagner intended her to remain where she has been from the first, merely scanning the ranks of the Pilgrims as they pass her. When the last of them has gone by she cries, in simple accents that, for all their resignation, are of a heart-rending intensity, "He will return no more!" Wagner always rose to an occasion of this kind: when the whole tragedy of a situation had to be summed up in two or three bars he invariably found the inevitable musical phrase for it.

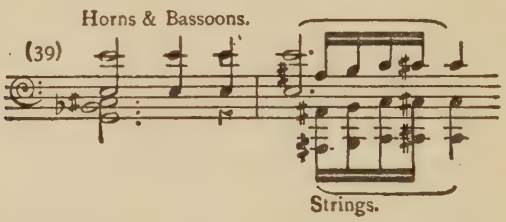
The last phrase of the Pilgrims is lost in the distance as Elisabeth, in solemn exaltation, falls on her knees and pours out an impassioned and yet spiritually elevated appeal to the Virgin

to take her into her own pure kingdom: the expressiveness of her music, with its broad melody and rich harmonies, is heightened by an obligato phrase that keeps recurring in the bass clarinet. She ends with a prayer that her pleadings may win Tannhäuser salvation for his sin.

For a long time she remains in devout rapture: when she rises from her knees she perceives Wolfram, who is approaching as if to speak to her. With a gesture she entreats him to be silent; but the Knight begs to be allowed to conduct her homeward. Still unable to trust herself to speak, she thanks him with a gesture for his love and faithfulness, and indicates that her path is towards heaven, where she has a high duty to fulfill; and she must go alone. Slowly she ascends the height and disappears along the path leading to the Wartburg, while the orchestra softly intones the theme of Wolfram's unselfish, renunciatory love (No. 34), from his song in the second Act. The orchestral tones mount higher and higher, and become of a more and more spiritual fineness in the wood-wind; while Wolfram, after following Elisabeth with his eyes until she is out of sight, seats himself on the rising ground to the left, and begins to preludise upon his harp.

Then, by one of those effects in which Wagner excelled, in which things seen and things heard are blended into one impression, we are made aware that night has fallen by means of deep trombone colour that is like a dark mantle falling over the clear colours that have hitherto prevailed in association with Elisabeth. Wolfram sees in the coming of the night a symbol of death casting its dark shadow over the earth, terrifying the soul that would fain leave the valley for the heights. But in the sky is the evening star, against whose pure radiance the night cannot prevail, and that " points the way through the vale." Accompanying himself on his harp, he sings the well-known song to the " Star of Eve " that has so often lightened his heart of its load of care; he conjures it to greet the sorrowful maiden when she leaves " this sad vale of earth " and " soars aloft to peace unending." His eyes raised to heaven, he continues to play on his harp

after his song is over, the 'cellos of the orchestra singing the familiar strain once more.

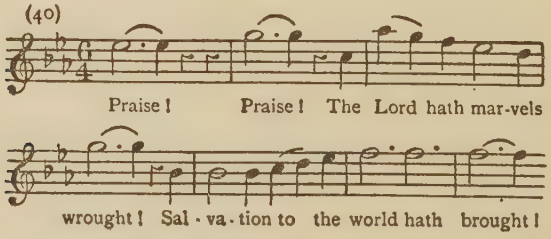
It is now quite dark. A sombre motive is heard in the horns and bassoons, with a surging figure against it in the strings: it is the motive of the Curse:

Tannhäuser enters, in a tattered pilgrim's robe; his face is pale and contorted, and he walks with difficulty, leaning heavily on his staff. His ear has caught the melancholy tones of the harp. Wolfram accosts the stranger, asking him who he is and whither he is wandering. But Tannhäuser has recognised him, and addresses him scornfully: " Who am I? *Thy* name I know right well! Wolfram art thou, the skilful minstrel! " Wolfram starts forward eagerly with a cry of " Henry! " and asks why, unabsolved, he has returned to his old haunts. Tannhäuser, his heart still full of suspicion and enmity, bids him have no care, for he seeks neither him nor any of his worthy companions. A note of unnatural craving comes into his voice: there is only *one* whom he seeks, one who can show him that path that once of old he found with wondrous ease — the path to the hill of Venus. Wolfram, in horror, conjures him to tell him everything. Has he then not been to Rome after all? Has he not sued for pardon?

Tannhäuser, as if recalling to memory by an effort something far distant, bitterly and wrathfully replies, " Yes, I have been to Rome! " But soon he realises, to his surprise, that Wolfram is not his enemy, and, seating himself exhaustedly at the foot of the rock, he is about to tell his story, when Wolfram makes to sit beside him. Tannhäuser bids him keep apart from one who is accursed, and Wolfram remains a short distance from him. Then

Tannhäuser tells him the story of his pilgrimage in full: how he went with the other pilgrims to Rome, denying himself on the way such comforts as they permitted themselves, always thinking of the angel who had raised her voice in intercession for him, and resolved that his penitence should wipe out all the tears he had wrung from her; through the narrative we hear incessantly, in the orchestra, the tortured theme of "Brokenness" (No. 37). At last, he says, he reached Rome: the day had broken, the bells were pealing from every steeple, and every heart was full of joy and hope. Kneeling before "him who holds the keys to heaven," he saw thousands pardoned and go on their way rejoicing; in the orchestra we hear the theme of Grace (No. 38). But when he begged to be shriven, he was repulsed with the terrible words, "If thou hast dwelt in Venus's hill thou art eternally accursed! As on the dead staff in my hand never again a leaf shall grow, so thou shalt never find salvation from the consuming fires of hell!" He fell to earth, confounded, and when he awoke night had fallen and he was alone, though in the distance he could hear the happy songs of the pardoned returning home. Then he turned and fled, with only one longing in his heart — to be received by Venus once more. His reason deserts him as he calls on her in frenzy to take him into her kingdom again.

The night deepens; light vapours gradually envelop the stage, and Wolfram feels an unholy influence in the air. In terror he tries to draw Tannhäuser to him; but just then the vapours begin to glow with a rosy light, and behind the scenes is heard the music of the Sirens(Nos. 5, 6, 7, etc.). As the enchantment draws nearer, and a whirl of dancing forms is visible, Tannhäuser becomes more wildly excited. At length Venus appears reclining on her couch in a clear roseate light. In seductive tones she bids him come to her, reminding him how she had foretold that men would reject him and he would return to her; she promises him raptures exceeding those of old. Crying out that his soul is lost, Tannhäuser struggles with Wolfram to get to her. Just as he shakes himself free, Wolfram utters the name of Elisabeth; Tannhäuser repeats the name and stands as if rooted to the spot. Behind the

scenes are heard the voices of the Knights praying for the soul of Elisabeth, that has just left its body. Wolfram cries, " Thine angel prays for thee at God's high throne: her prayer is heard: Henry, thou art redeemed! " Venus cries out despairingly, " Woe's me! I have lost him! "

The vapours darken for a time, showing the gleam of torches through them; then they pass away entirely. Morning dawns, and from the Wartburg descends a torch-lit procession — first the elder Pilgrims, then the Minstrels bearing on an open bier the body of Elisabeth, finally the Landgrave, Knights, and Nobles. The men about the bier sing " Blessed be the pure one, who now appears with the saints round the throne of the Lord," and Tannhäuser, who has been led to the bier by Wolfram, bends over Elisabeth's body and sinks lifeless to the earth, crying with his last breath, " Holy Saint Elisabeth, pray for me! " All invert their torches, so extinguishing them; the stage is now illumined only by the red light of dawn. And now the younger Pilgrims enter, bearing in their midst a staff covered with green leaves, and singing, to the following melody:

of the miracle that symbolises the redemption of Tannhäuser's soul. Finally, everyone joins in a majestic intonation of the motive of Salvation by Grace (No. 1), round which the pulsating violin figures (No. 3) play as in the overture.

THE MASTERSINGERS OF NUREMBERG

THOSE who know the scale on which the *Mastersingers* is planned will be amused to hear that Wagner originally intended it, in contrast to the impracticable *Ring*, as a thoroughly practicable little opera that should be well within the scope of any European theatre. He first conceived the idea of it in the summer of 1845, soon after he had finished *Tannhäuser*. Just as a merry satyr-play used to follow the tragedy in the Athenian theatre, so would he have a comedy as a pendant to the tragedy of *Tannhäuser*.

The real hero of the *Mastersingers* was to be the " Folk," whom Wagner was very much given to idealising at that time; this Folk was to be typified in Hans Sachs, the old Mastersinger of the sixteenth century. The French troubadours, and after them the German Minnesingers, were in the main aristocratic. The Mastersingers, who followed the Minnesingers, were a more democratic development; they were the ordinary working townspeople of the mediæval guilds, very much as Wagner has shown them in his opera. He derived his information about them from various old books, in which he found details not only of their contests of song but of their quaint rules of art. Almost everything in connection with their poems and their music was systematised, and it was only by complying with the rules that anyone could earn the title of " Master." This could be won only at an open contest before the guild, and it was the business of the official " Marker " to decide whether the candidate had or had not committed enough breaches of the rules to disqualify him.

Wagner was always guided by his subconscious rather than his conscious self in the creation of his works, and his instinct soon decided that it was not yet time for him to proceed with the *Mastersingers*. His view of life was still predominantly serious, and he worked out this mood in *Lohengrin* and the first sketch for the *Ring*. In 1857, for practical reasons, he suspended work upon the *Ring* and took up *Tristan*. It was not till after the *Tannhäuser* catastrophe in Paris in 1861 and the difficulties in connection with the production of *Tristan* in Vienna that he turned seriously to the *Mastersingers*; and it is curious that it was only during the period of his worst troubles that he should find the humour and the serenity of soul to create his comedy.

During the last few years there have been published the whole of the preliminary sketches of the libretto. The first dates from 1845, the second and third from the winter of 1861. In the latter year Wagner had met once again in Vienna the famous critic Hanslick, and come to the conclusion that he did not like him. In the third prose sketch, which was written about that time, the name of the Marker is not Beckmesser, as it ultimately became, but Hanslick (*sic*); Wagner's intention to satirise and caricature his hated critic is therefore beyond dispute. As Wagner used to be always reading his poems and sketches to his friends, there cannot be the slightest doubt that Hanslick knew that Beckmesser was intended to be a malicious portrait of himself; and this knowledge must have played some part in his later attacks upon Wagner.

The final libretto was written in Paris in November 1861 and January 1862, but it was not until 1867 that the music was finished. The first performance was given in Munich on the 21st June, 1868, under Hans von Bülow; the overture, however, had been performed six years earlier at a concert in Leipzig.

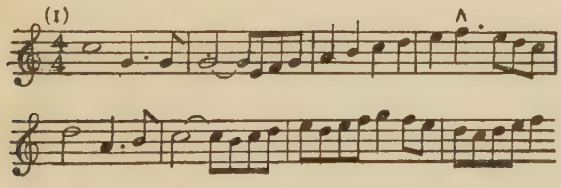
The subject of the opera is a simple one. A young Franconian knight, Walther von Stolzing, has made the acquaintance in Nuremberg of a rich goldsmith, Veit Pogner, and his daughter Eva, and has of course fallen in love with the latter. Pogner has been distressed by discovering in what low estimation the burghers are held on account of their absorption in business; so on Mid-

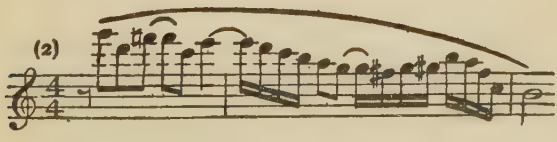
summer Day he offers his daughter, with all his money, to whoever shall win the prize in a contest of song.

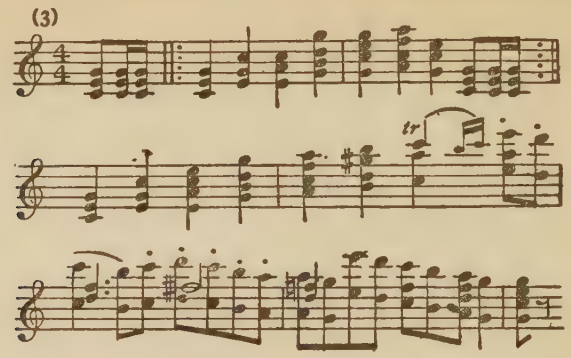
The middle-aged Beckmesser, the town clerk, has pretensions to Eva's hand, but Pogner insists on his taking his chance with the others in the contest. Before Walther can compete as a "Master" he must undergo a preliminary trial; from this, however, he emerges discomfited, the Marker having unfortunately been Beckmesser himself, who not only disapproves of the impulsive young man's many departures from the rules, but has an intuition that Walther will prove a dangerous rival. In the end, after Beckmesser has tried and failed, and covered himself with the ridicule of the crowd, Walther, though not officially a Master, sings so much to the satisfaction of everyone that he wins Eva.

The overture is one of Wagner's most elaborate works in this genre; it passes in review most of the main themes of the coming opera.

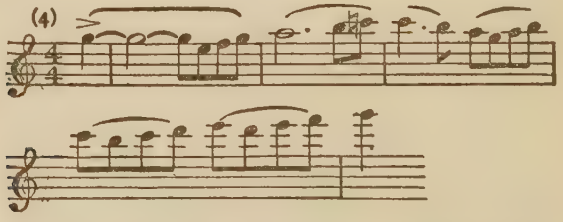
The opening strain is that of the Mastersingers idealised — large-handed, full-bodied, generous:



This is followed by a hint of the expressive theme associated with the wooing of Walther:

and this by the magnificent Mastersingers' Fanfare, which is a genuine old Mastersinger tune:

(3)

Then comes a superb expansion of a theme that is heard in the final chorus of the work, in which the Nuremberg population sing the praises of German art:

(4)



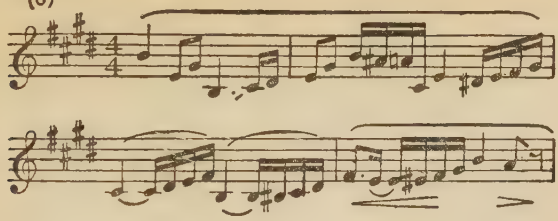
According to Wagner, this represents the fundamentally sound art of the Folk as against the rather peddling pedantry of the official Masters.

After a magnificent climax there comes an intermediate section devoted to various aspects of Walther's love. Three chief themes may be distinguished. The first typifies his youthful passion in general:

(5)

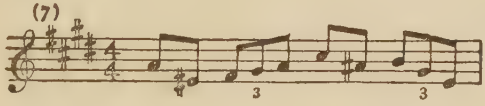
The second is a quotation from the Prize Song:

(6)

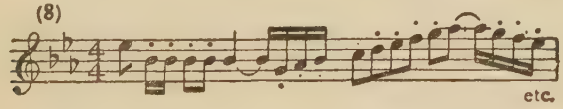


The third is the Call of Spring, which is first heard in his Trial Song, in the first act, and that haunts the memory of Hans Sachs in a later scene:

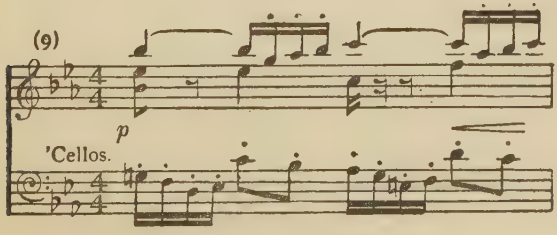
(7)

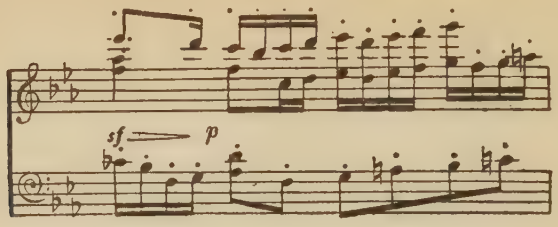


Once more the music works up to a climax, but Wagner suddenly brake off in order to introduce the pattering theme of the Apprentices, which, it will be seen, is a sort of miniature, perky version of the Mastersingers motive (No. 1):

(8)

It is given out staccato by the wood-wind. A little later the continuation of this merry theme, still in the chattering wood-wind, is combined with another theme in the 'cellos:

(9)





This latter is the phrase to which the populace jeer at Beckmesser in the third act when he is making himself ridiculous in the rôle of wooer.

The music now gradually gathers up its whole strength and settles down into a marvellous contrapuntal combination of three of the themes we have already heard, that of the Prize Song (No. 6), the Fanfare (No. 2), and the theme of the Mastersingers (No. 1); and the grand flood of the music sweeps on to a broad estuary, as it were, not coming to a formal close but debouching in the opening scene of the opera.

This represents an oblique section of St. Catherine's Church in Nuremberg; on the left are the last few rows of pews; in the foreground is the open space before the choir; and in the last row of seats Eva and Magdalena, her maid, are sitting. Leaning against a pillar close by, and looking fixedly at Eva, who every now and then turns her face to him, stands Walther von Stolzing.

The chorus (mostly at the back of the stage), accompanied by the organ, give out a splendid chorale — perhaps the only first-rate German chorale written since the seventeenth century. During the pauses between the lines of the chorale, while Eva and Walther are corresponding by means of looks and gestures, the orchestra breaks out into a series of expressive phrases based on Walther's love theme (No. 2). The congregation rises from its knees to leave the church, the while the organ pours out a majestic voluntary, which also is based on No. 2. Eva manages to delay her entry to the last, and as she approaches Walther, and the latter begs to be allowed to say a single word to her, she sends Magdalena back to

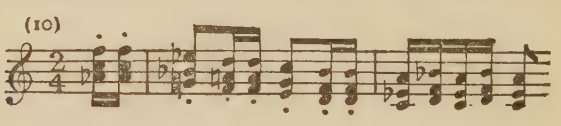
find her handkerchief, which, with great forethought, she has left in her pew.

This little comedy is repeated a couple of times more: when Magdalena returns with the handkerchief and interrupts the conversation between the lovers she is sent back for a missing pin; and having returned with this, she discovers that she has forgotten her own hymn-book. On her last return, before Walther can get from Eva a reply to his question whether she is betrothed or not, Magdalena thanks him for his kindness in attending to her mistress, and informs him that while it is quite true that Eva will shortly be a bride, nobody yet knows who the bridegroom will be; the matter will be settled at the trial of song on the next day.

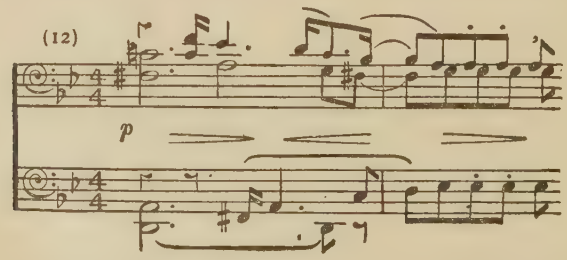
Walther is astonished at this method of bestowing a young lady's hand; but he is a little reassured when Eva impulsively tells him that whomever the Masters may select, she will choose him or no one. This bold declaration is a little too much for Magdalena, who attempts to hurry her mistress home, reminding her that it was only yesterday that she saw the young knight for the first time. Eva's reply to this is that he is the living image of David — not David the Prentice, who is in love with Magdalena, nor David the harpist, who is shown on the shield of the Masters' guild, but the glorious young Goliath-slaying David painted by Albrecht Dürer, with sword at his side, sling in his hand, and his golden locks shining in the sun.

They are interrupted by David, Hans Sachs's apprentice, who enters with a rule and a large piece of white chalk and proceeds to plan out the stage for the coming meeting of the Masters. He explains that they are about to hold a trial of song with the object of elevating a Prentice to the guild. Magdalena takes Eva off, first of all asking David to do all he can for the young knight, especially as regards putting him in the way to become a Master. The lovers bid farewell to each other, promising to meet again in secret that evening.

During the following scene the Prentices, with a good deal of rough hilarity, set the stage for the coming meeting of the guild, while David, full of simple, boyish self-importance, pours into the

stunned ears of Walther a full account of the complicated rules of the guild. He drives Walther almost distracted with the long list of "modes" and the regulations of the "tablature" — i.e. the rules for the arrangement of the words in stanzas, the treatment of the melodies, the management of the breath, the necessity for clearness of diction, and so on. David's oration is really a summarised description of the rules of the historical Mastersingers. Throughout this scene there runs the merry little theme of David:

and when the lad speaks feelingly of his own troubles in mastering the tablature under the guidance and correction of his master, the cobbler Hans Sachs, we hear a motive that is always associated in the opera with Sachs himself in his cobbling capacity:

David of course warns Walther what he has to expect from the Marker, whose somewhat cantankerous motive runs thus:

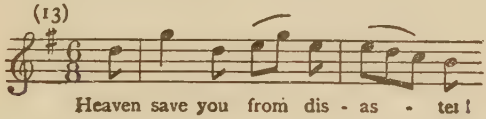


In the later scenes of the opera this motive is of course appropriated to Beckmesser.

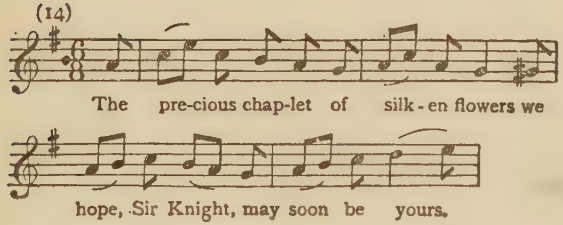
At the conclusion of David's address, Walther decides that he

must become a Master, for which purpose he will sing the guild a song of his own invention. Meanwhile the Prentices, who have been devoting themselves to play rather than to work, have managed to set the scene all wrong. David makes them do it all over again under his direction, and the Prentices join hands and dance round the Marker's box, singing a joyously ironic greeting to the young knight, whom they evidently regard as fatally over-ambitious. Two of their typical phrases may be quoted:

(13)

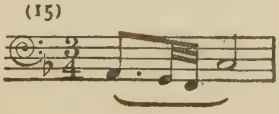


(14)



The Prentices scatter in alarm as the vestry door opens and Pogner enters with Beckmesser. They are discussing the forthcoming contest for the hand of Eva; the elderly Beckmesser, who is town clerk of Nuremberg, has so high an opinion of his own art that he does not doubt his ability to be victor in the contest of song the next day, but he is uneasy about the clause in the regulations that gives Eva the right to reject even the successful suitor if he is not otherwise agreeable to her. During their colloquy Wagner makes plentiful use of a little figure:

(15)



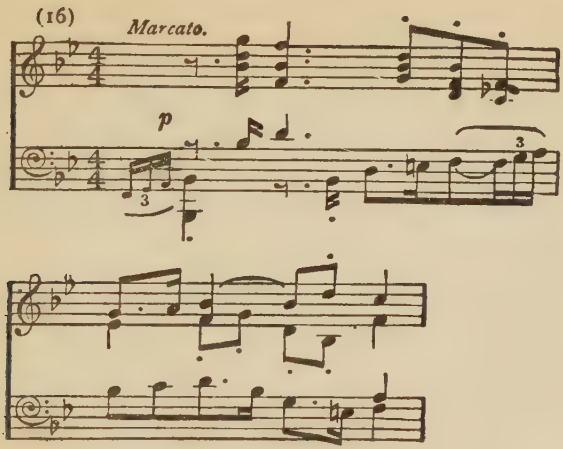
that always typifies the guild.

Pogner refuses to alter the rule he has laid down, and Beckmesser walks aside with a peevish gesture. Walther now comes forward and courteously accosts Pogner. He assures the latter that his object in coming to Nuremberg was to perfect himself in the arts of verse and tone, and that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to become a Mastersinger. He receives a little setback when he is told that he can only become a Master, and so qualify for the contest for the hand of Eva, by passing through the usual examination. Pogner, however, is delighted at his resolution, and introduces him to the Mastersingers, who now enter one by one.

Pogner, in his famous " Address," tells his fellows how grieved he has been at the reproach of commercialism and materialism that has been levelled against the burghers, and of his resolve to give to their beloved art the best gift he can think of — his daughter and his goods. Beckmesser is still uneasy about the affair, and now suggests that the maiden shall be allowed to choose her bridegroom without a contest. Pogner makes his meaning clearer: Eva is not bound to accept the winner of the contest, but if she refuses him she cannot have another bridegroom; the successful contestant must be a Mastersinger or nobody.

Sachs suggests what he thinks is a better way — to leave the decision to the Folk and the maiden in conjunction; such a combination of unspoiled natures, he thinks, cannot possibly go wrong. The suggestion is flouted by the Mastersingers, who have a wholesome contempt for the common people. Beckmesser taunts Sachs with composing doggerel for the mob, and also hints, satirically, that Sachs himself might become a wooer; the cobbler humorously puts the suggestion aside with the remark that the favoured one must be younger than either himself or Beckmesser — a reflection upon his age which Beckmesser does not appreciate.

Pogner now introduces Walther to the guild to undergo his trial, and the young knight steps forward with easy, well-bred dignity to the following strain:



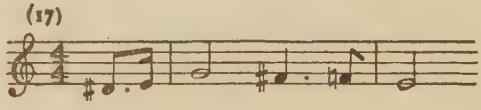
His replies to the Mastersingers' questions show that he has learnt his art from nature and from the long-dead Master Walther von der Vogelweide rather than from the guild. Beckmesser does not deny that Walther von der Vogelweide was a Master, but as he has long been dead it is impossible that the guild should have learned any rules from him!

Some of the Masters are for deciding the matter there and then, but Sachs prevails upon them to let the trial run its usual course. Kothmer, the baker, reads out the rules of the tabulature, informing the candidate of the scheme upon which a master-song must be constructed — it must be in three parts, consisting of two stanzas followed by an after-song, with the same melody for the first two stanzas but a different one for the after-song; and so on. Walther bursts into an ardent song of love and spring, and we soon hear, behind the curtains of the Marker's box, the grating pencil of Beckmesser, who has with great glee undertaken the office of Marker. Walther commits practically every fault that is possible, and puts the final touch to the horror of the guild by rising from the chair; for it was a rule of the contest that the singer must remain seated.

Beckmesser and the other Masters are for declaring Walther to be " outsung," i.e. rejected; but Hans Sachs begs them not to be so hasty. He is wiser and more humane than his colleagues. It is true, he says, that the song is new and not according to the rules, but for all that there is something masterly about it. If it did not obey the rules of the guild, may it not have obeyed equally good rules of its own, and ought they not therefore to try to find out what those rules are?

At this point we hear, for the first time, a noble motive that is afterwards always associated with the melancholy of Sachs, his sense of his difference from his fellows, and his feeling that happiness is to be found only in renunciation:

(17)

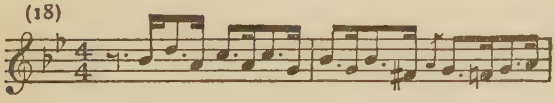


His plea, of course, merely horrifies the already outraged pedants, and Walther is unanimously declared " outsung." Finally, unable to make himself heard through the uproar, the young man, with a proud, contemptuous gesture, leaves the chair and walks off the stage, followed by the others. At last only Sachs remains. He gazes thoughtfully at the empty chair; as the Prentices take hold of this, the wise old cobbler turns away with a gesture half humorous, half despairing, and the curtain falls.

The second act shows a street in Nuremberg, which is crossed by an alley running from the front of the stage to the back, where it turns crookedly. On the right of this alley is a large house — Pogner's; on the left, opposite to it, is the humbler house of Hans Sachs. To the right of the stage, by Pogner's house, is a large lime tree, with a stone bench in front of it. By Sachs's house is an elder tree, the branches of which hang over the door. His house is entered by a door from the main street; i.e. the door faces the audience on the left of the stage. The house has two windows facing the alley; one of these belongs to the cobbler's workshop, the other to a room farther back.

It is a beautiful summer evening, and David is closing the shutters of the windows of Sachs's house. The other Apprentices are engaged in the same work on their respective masters' houses, and they sing a short snatch of song in anticipation of the coming delights of Midsummer Day. Magdalena comes out of Pogner's house with a basket on her arm. After some chaff of the pair by the other Prentices, Magdalena manages to get a word with David. The basket is full of good things for him to eat, but first of all she must know how the knight fared at the contest. David has to tell her of his defeat. Horrified at the news, which she knows will bring grief to her mistress, Magdalena snatches the basket away and leaves him. This gives the boys a better chance than ever to tease David, and they are enjoying themselves to the full, when, just as David's temper is at breaking-point, Sachs enters and disperses them.

Sachs and David enter the former's house as Pogner and Eva come up the alley, as if returning from a walk, the daughter hanging on her father's arm. David comes out of the room with a light, places it on the work-bench that is by the window, and sets to work. Both Eva and Pogner are thinking over the scene in the church. Pogner is a little worried at the course events have taken, and is beginning to doubt the wisdom of his promise, which involves the happiness of his child. During the colloquy we hear the theme that always typifies fine old Nuremberg:

(18)

Eva, on her part, is burning to know how Walther fared at the contest. Neither of them, however, is in the mood to disclose his mind to the other. Finally Pogner enters his house, leaving Eva outside. Magdalena enters at that moment, and Eva learns the distressing news of the rejection of Walther. The poor girl wants to know more, and her thoughts instinctively turn to Sachs; she will go to him, she says, and ask him to tell her everything, for

she knows how he loves her. Magdalena tries to dissuade her, but just then Sachs, in indoor dress, comes from the inner room into the workshop and bids David place the table at the door, where the air is fresh and cool, and then get to bed.

Left to himself, Sachs arranges his work, makes as if to begin upon it, then lays it down and leans back, lost in thought. The beauty of the evening and the scent of the elder tree have worked upon his poetic soul, and he muses upon the lovely song of spring that Walther had sung. It haunts him; he cannot completely grasp it, and yet, do what he will, he cannot escape its magic. He comes to the conclusion that these are not thoughts appropriate to his age and station, so he will get on with his cobbling, "and let all this poetry be." And yet, and yet — the melody will not leave his mind; the Masters, he says, may deny this young man the title of Master, but one hearer his song certainly pleased — Hans Sachs.

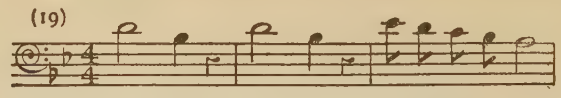
Just as he has thought himself into a more cheerful frame of mind, and is settling down to his work, Eva enters. A long and beautiful fluent musical dialogue occurs between the two. Each at first fences with the other; Sachs divines the reason for her coming to him, while Eva expects him to spare her modesty the task of disclosing her real purpose. The elderly widower has always loved her, and we gather that had Walther not come upon the scene, the old cobbler's love would have been sufficient for Eva. At last the knight's name is mentioned, and some apparently unsympathetic remarks by Sachs betray Eva into a revelation of what is in her mind. She turns petulantly upon the supposed enemy of her lover, and crosses the street with Magdalena with the intention of entering her house, but pauses in great agitation at the door. Sachs follows her with his eyes, his heart full of understanding, love, and pity.

He now closes the upper half of his door so that only a glimmer of light comes through it, with the result that he himself is hardly visible. Eva bids Magdalena go inside and say that her mistress has gone to bed. But Magdalena has a message for her from Beckmesser; Eva is to be at the window that night, when Beckmesser will sing her a serenade — a rehearsal of the song with which he

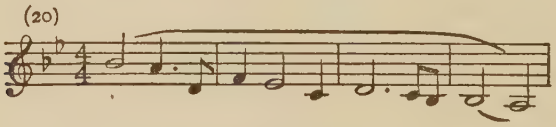
hopes to secure the prize the next day. This, in Eva's present angry mood, is the last straw. Walther now comes to the rendezvous, and the lovers, after a passionate scene, resolve to elope. Walther's heart is black within him at the memory of his reception by the Masters, but he sees a beautiful world before him in which he is Master by right. A night-watchman sounds his cow horn and frightens the lovers for a moment; when he has passed by, Eva goes into the house to change into Magdalena's clothes, while Walther waits for her under the linden tree.

Eva returns, and the pair are about to make their way up the alley in the darkness, when Sachs, who has heard the dialogue, and feels that he must find a better way out of the difficulty than this, suddenly opens his shutter so that a bright light strikes across the street; Eva and Walther, suddenly made visible, withdraw hastily into the shade. For a moment the pair debate the best way of escaping. Eva tells Walther that it is Sachs who is sitting there. Walther is delighted; is not Hans Sachs his friend? Eva, remembering her recent conversation with Sachs, assures him that the cobbler is as great an enemy of his as any of them. Walther, in a rage, says that in that case out shall go the cobbler's light at once; but before he can make a move, Beckmesser appears; he has crept up behind the night-watchman. He looks up at the windows of Pogner's house, then sits on a stone seat that is between the two windows of Sachs's house in the alley, and begins to tune his lute.

As soon as Walther realizes who it is, he thinks the opportunity has come to pay off an old score; but once more the lovers' plans are frustrated by Sachs, to whom an idea has occurred. Without being perceived, he has now placed his work-bench right in the doorway, where he makes preparations to commence his work. Eva counsels delay; Beckmesser, she says, will sing his song and go, and then they will be able to escape without fear of detection by her father. But just as Beckmesser, after strumming on his lute, prepares to sing, Sachs lets his light fall full on the street once more, hits his last a heavy blow with the hammer and bursts out into a robust and racy cobbling song:

(19)

the words of which, dealing with the adventures of Adam and Eve in Paradise, and the pity of the Lord for the sorry condition of the barefoot couple, refer obliquely to Eva and Walther. When Sachs comes to the final verse of his song, a counterpoint to the melody comes out loudly in the wood-wind and horns:

(20)



This phrase, which is an outpouring of the sadness that is so often at the bottom of the gentle old man's heart, is generally known as the Renunciation motive; it afterwards becomes the chief theme of the Introduction to the third act of the opera.[1]

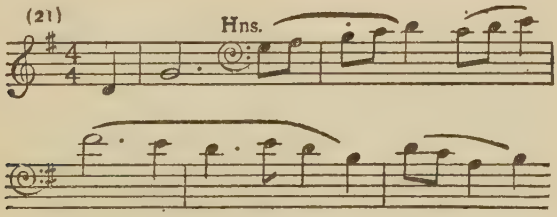
Beckmesser, who is greatly annoyed at this interruption, begs to be allowed to proceed with his serenade; but Sachs points out that unless he gets on with his work he cannot possibly finish the shoes he has promised for the Marker; has not the latter already reproached him for thinking too much about poetry and music and neglecting his cobbling? They arrive at a compromise: Beckmesser is to go on with his serenade and Sachs is to continue with his work, but only in the capacity of a sort of cobbler-marker: he will hammer a nail only when Beckmesser commits a fault. The faults, however, happen to be so numerous that the shoes are completed before the serenade.

Beckmesser, worked up into a temper, then throws prudence to the winds. The noise he and Sachs have made between them has roused the neighbours from their sleep, and heads in nightcaps begin to appear at the windows. David enters and discovers, as he

[1] No. 17 is also called a Renunciation motive by some commentators. The themes were not labelled by Wagner himself.

thinks, Beckmesser serenading Magdalena, who is at Eva's window in her mistress's clothes. He begins to belabour the minstrel; the Apprentices, the Townspeople, and finally the dignified Masters themselves are all dragged into the fray.

When the confusion is at its height, Sachs seizes his opportunity; he takes possession of Walther and draws him into his shop, while Pogner discovers what he takes to be Magdalena and hurries her into the house. Once more the night-watchman's horn is heard approaching, and the crowd breaks up. The street-doors close and all the window lights go out, and when the watchman arrives all is quiet. Wagner, like the great poetic artist he was, would not let the curtain ring down, as most other composers would have done, upon the scene of the riot. He puts a lovely old tune into the mouth of the night-watchman, who blows a final discordant blast on his horn; then, as he walks slowly down the alley, the full moon shines out, and the orchestra fills the theatre with the magic of an exquisite summer night. Even when, in the final bars, the bassoon plays a last broken reminiscence of the grotesque serenade of Beckmesser, this too is turned to poetry and beauty.

The third act commences with the famous orchestral prelude that describes Sachs's attempt to reach spiritual happiness through renunciation. The 'cellos begin with the Renunciation motive which has already been quoted as example No. 20. It is taken up by one instrument and another, worked out very expressively, and succeeded by a solemn passage for the horns, which is an anticipation of the magnificent chorus with which the populace greets Hans Sachs in a later scene:

Reminiscences of the cobbler's song from the second act appear; the music floats aloft and seems to lose itself in the spaces of the

sky, then descends, and a last noble meditation upon the Renunciation theme brings the prelude to a close.

When the curtain rises we see the inside of Sachs's workshop. In the background is a door leading to the street; on the right, a staircase leading to another room; on the left, the window that overlooks the alley, with flowers before it. Sachs sits in a large armchair at this window, reading a large folio. The morning sun streams through the window.

David comes in from the street-door with a basket upon his arm, which he places by the work-bench behind the door. He produces flowers and ribbons from the basket, which he lays on the table, and finally a sausage and a cake, which he is about to eat when Sachs, who has not seen him, or at all events taken any notice of him, noisily turns over a leaf of the huge book and startles him; David hastily conceals the food and turns round. He is not at all at his ease on account of the events of the night before. He assumes that his master is in a temper with him and humbly implores forgiveness. " Can a Prentice," he says plaintively, " always behave? " If Sachs only knew Magdalena as well as he (David) does, he would forgive the escapade, for she is always so kind to him; she feeds him when he is hungry, and consoles him when he has been thrashed. He admits having given Beckmesser a drubbing, but Magdalena has now explained the whole affair, and has sent him flowers and ribbons to wear on Midsummer Day.

He goes on babbling in this vein for a long time before Sachs notices him, so absorbed is the latter in his book. Sachs is in one of his kindly philosophical moods. He pardons his apprentice, makes him repeat his " verse " for the day, and then tells him to go and dress himself up for the coming festivity in the meadows. There is a droll musical touch while David is singing his song. The words describe John the Baptist, on the banks of the Jordan, baptising a little boy by the name of Johannes, who, when his parents took him back to Germany, found that in Nuremberg Johannes had become Hans. Hans? Hans? Why that is Sachs's own name, and this is his name-day! David's mind is so full of the events of the night before that when he commences his song he unconsciously

sings the first line of it not to the proper melody, but to the tune of Beckmesser's absurd serenade.

Left alone, the old cobbler-poet broods upon the world and its problems — the illusions of mankind, the hatred of man for man, the madness that seems to hover over all human endeavour. He thinks of his beloved Nuremberg, usually so serene, disturbed by such an episode as that of the preceding night. And yet — there was the elder's scent to beautify Midsummer's Eve, and now has come Midsummer Day, the day on which he, Hans Sachs, will bring good out of all this hatred and folly, both to Nuremberg and to the lovers. This is the famous monologue "Wahn! wahn!" ("Mad, mad, all the world mad!"). When Sachs speaks of Nuremberg we hear the typical Nuremberg theme that has already appeared in the second act (No. 18).

The monologue over, Walther enters from the room on the right. He has had a lovely dream, and Sachs assures him that it is in dreams that insight into the inner meaning of things is given to man. He persuades him to tell his dream in poetic form, and Walther, in response, sings the future Prize Song — all of it but the conclusion, which he is not in the mood for then. Sachs wisely refrains from pressing him, assuring him that it will come in the right place and at the right time; then he escorts Walther to the inner chamber and bids him dress richly for the festival.

When they have left, Beckmesser enters furtively; he is aching all over from the thrashing he has had from David, and the orchestra, by its reminiscences of themes from the second act, lets us see that his mind is still running frantically on the awful scene of the night before. Finding himself near the table, the sheet of paper on which Sachs has taken down Walther's dream-song attracts his attention. Beckmesser, after reading the glowing words, naturally assumes that Sachs himself intends to enter the lists for the hand of Eva, and that this is the song he means to sing. Partly with the desire to frustrate a rival, partly in the knowledge that this is a better effort than anything he himself is capable of, he slips the manuscript into his pocket just as Sachs enters, and then upbraids his supposed rival for what he takes to have been his deception.

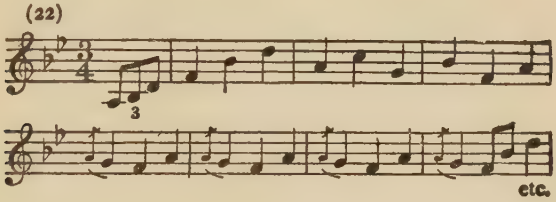
It is a little while before Sachs can understand, but a glance at the table, from which the manuscript is missing, enlightens him. Greatly amused, he assures Beckmesser that he has no intention of competing, and that he feels so friendly towards the town clerk that he will even present him with the song. Beckmesser is now in the seventh heaven of delight; he cannot find words to express his admiration for Sachs, and finally dances out in a very ecstasy of joy. One thing only he insists upon — that Sachs will not disclose the secret of the authorship of the verses.

When Beckmesser has danced himself out, Eva enters. She makes the excuse that her foot is pinched by the new pair of shoes that Sachs has made for her, but the wise old man understands very well why she has come. While he is pretending to put the shoe to rights, Walther, in gorgeous knightly raiment, appears on the stairs leading from the inner room. The sight of Eva releases a spring in him, and he sings, spellbound, the rapturous final stanza of his dream. Eva breaks down, and pours out her gratitude to Sachs in words that let us see clearly enough how deeply she has been in love with him. When he humorously contends that he is too old for her, and that he would not, by marrying her, willingly bring upon himself the fate of King Marke, the orchestra points the moral with a quotation from *Tristan*.

A new song, he tells them, has been created, and must now be baptised. Magdalena and David must act as witnesses, but as no Prentice can be a witness, Sachs confers Mastership upon David with a box upon the ear; it was the formula by which a Prentice was elevated to the rank of journeyman. The five characters thus being conveniently got upon the stage together, Wagner sets them singing the magnificent quintet, and the curtain goes down as the characters leave the house, David closing the shop-door.

A brief orchestral interlude leads the way into the final scene, which shows us an open meadow outside Nuremberg, with the River Pegnitz winding across it. Joyous crowds arrive by boats, and there is much merrymaking among the Apprentices and the crowd. A mediæval trade procession starts, the shoemakers marching across in grand style to the accompaniment of general cheers,

followed by the tailors, and these by the bakers. Girls arrive and dance with the Prentices; the waltz (it is perhaps hypercritical to point out that the waltz was not invented at that time) is of delightfully rustic quality:



Finally the Mastersingers enter in great pomp, Pogner leading Eva. They all mount the platform on the left of the stage, and the crowd breaks out into a song of loving welcome of its idol, Hans Sachs. The melody is that shown as No. 21; the words, which are a greeting to Luther and the German Reformation, are from a poem by the historical Hans Sachs. Sachs, in reply, tells the company of the offer made by Pogner, and the contest begins.

Beckmesser, perspiring profusely, mounts a little grassy mound that has been made in the centre of the stage, and attempts, with many furtive consultations of the manuscript, to sing the song he stole, though he can neither understand nor even remember it. His grotesque efforts bring upon him the derision of the crowd, and at last he rushes away in rage and disgust, accusing Sachs of having led him into this trap.

Sachs explains to the company that it is quite true he gave Beckmesser a song, but it was not such nonsense as the town clerk has made of it. The fault was in the singing; if the words and the tune are blended in the right way the song is a fine one, and he is prepared to call a witness to prove it. At a signal from him Walther comes forward, salutes the Masters and the people with high-bred courtesy, and takes his place upon the mound. He sings the Prize Song in its complete form, the crowd, towards the end, joining in with comments of satisfaction. When he has finished he is led to the steps of the platform, where he kneels to Eva, who places on his

brow a wreath of laurel and myrtle and leads him to her father, before whom both of them kneel while Pogner gives them his benediction. But when Pogner would give Walther also the gold chain of the guild, the young man pushes it angrily away, so bitter is his memory of his reception by the Masters the day before.

Once more Sachs comes to the rescue. He takes Walther by the hand and exhorts him not to disdain the Masters like that, but to honour their art; they have done their best for it according to their lights. Then he turns to the company with a note of warning. An evil day, he says, may dawn, when a disunited Germany shall be under foreign rulers, when " foreign mists before us rise to dupe and blind our German eyes." When that happens, it will be the death of all that is good and true if the German race betrays its German art. So let them honour their German Masters — let them but take these to their hearts and no harm shall come to German art, though holy Rome itself go down into dust.

Eva takes the wreath from Walther's brow and places it upon that of Hans Sachs, who in turn takes the chain from Pogner and hangs it round Walther's neck. The scene ends with an apotheosis of Sachs, Walther and Eva standing one on each side of him, with Pogner before him on one knee, as if in homage, and the remaining Mastersingers pointing to him as their chief, while the whole assembly repeats the final words of the old cobbler.

The Mastersingers is, and will probably long remain, the greatest of all comedies in music, if indeed " comedy " is the correct word to apply to an opera that, in addition to its humorous episodes, contains so much that is the quintessence of serious beauty, of profound philosophy, and of mellow wisdom. That such a work should be written during the period of Wagner's worst luck and deepest depression is a striking proof of how independent the artist's inner nature is of the circumstances of his outer life. *The Mastersingers* has had only one real successor in music — Strauss's masterpiece *The Rose-Cavalier*.

LOHENGRIN

WAGNER had first conceived the idea of an opera on the subject of Lohengrin during his stay in Paris (1839-42), but the autumn of 1842 and the years 1843 and 1844 were mostly occupied with the production of *Rienzi* and *The Flying Dutchman,* his work as conductor at the Dresden Opera, and the composition of *Tannhäuser.* This last was completely finished by the middle of April 1845.

In July of that year Wagner went to spend his holiday at Marienbad in Bohemia. He was in a state of great nervous excitement over the coming production of *Tannhäuser* and other matters, and his doctor had ordered him complete quietness, baths, and a water cure. But Wagner found it impossible to rest. In his autobiography he attributes his excitable condition partly to the hot summer, partly to the " volcanic " soil of Bohemia, which always had a curiously exhilarating effect on him. One of his books he had taken with him to read on his holiday was the old anonymous German epic of *Lohengrin.* With this under his arm he used to wander into the neighbouring woods, and there, stretched out on the bank of a brook, he would re-create in his mind's eye the world of the old legends.

" The result," he says, " was an ever-increasing and distressing state of excitement. *Lohengrin,* the first conception of which dates from the end of my sojourn in Paris, suddenly stood fully formed before me, down to the smallest detail of the dramatic construction. The legend of the swan, which forms such an important feature of all the versions of this body of myths that my studies

had made me acquainted with, had in particular an enormous fascination for my imagination." He remembered his doctor's advice to keep as quiet as possible, and tried to drive *Lohengrin* out of his mind by taking up another and less nervously exciting subject.

He had recently become interested in Hans Sachs and the Mastersingers, and, the subject taking possession of him, in a very little while he had drafted out the first sketch for his subsequent comic opera. " As it was a particularly cheerful subject," he says, " and one much less exciting than the other, I saw no harm in putting it on paper in spite of my doctor's orders. I did so, and I hoped it would free me from my preoccupation with *Lohengrin*. But I was mistaken; for no sooner had I got into my noontide bath than I felt so strong a desire to write out *Lohengrin* that, unable to remain in the bath for the prescribed hour, I jumped out impatiently after a few minutes, and, barely giving myself time to dress, ran like a madman to my lodging to put on paper what was crying out for expression within me. The same thing occurred for several days, until *Lohengrin* was sketched out complete." The doctor, of course, gave him up as a hopeless case. Wagner's excitement went on increasing every day, and he could work off his superfluous energy only by long, fatiguing walks.

It was not until the September of 1846 that he could settle down in good earnest to the composition of the music to *Lohengrin*. Between that month and March 1847 he wrote the third act of the opera. The first was written in May and June 1847, and the second act, with the Prelude, between June and August. The orchestration was finished by March 1848.

It will be remembered that in May 1849 Wagner had to flee from Dresden to escape arrest for his complicity in the revolutionary disturbances of that month. In January 1850 he went from Switzerland to Paris, hoping to get an opera produced there. It was about this time that he became involved in the affair with Madame Jessie Laussot that almost ended in his flight to the East with her. The hectic affair came to a sudden close in April, and Wagner, cut to the heart, turned for consolation to music again.

He looked over the score of *Lohengrin* and sent it to Liszt, who was at that time in authority in Weimar. He implored Liszt to produce the opera, declaring that to no one else would he entrust its destiny. Liszt put the new work in hand at once, and it was produced at Weimar under him on the 26th August, 1850.

As usual, Wagner insisted on the opera, long as it was, being performed without cuts; the only excision he would consent to was one of fifty-six bars in Lohengrin's Narration in the third act; and, again as usual, the great length of the opera was at least as much responsible as the novelty of its style for the relative coldness of its reception by some hearers.

Wagner could never be got to see that he induced sheer physical fatigue in many of his admirers by the mere length of time he kept their attention on the strain in the theatre. In the years immediately following, his anger with conductors who insisted on the necessity or the advisability of cuts did a great deal to delay the progress of the opera. However, in spite of everything, it made its way to such an extent that Wagner, towards the close of his long exile from Germany, could say with humorous bitterness that he was the only German who had not heard *Lohengrin*. He first heard the opera in Vienna on the 15th May, 1861, when he received from the whole house such an ovation as had never yet fallen to his lot.

In the spring of 1860 he gave some concerts in Brussels, and one day he went to Antwerp, being interested in the town not so much because of its works of art and antiquities as because of its association with *Lohengrin*. But, he says, "I was very much put out of humour by my disappointment over the position of the famous citadel. For the benefit of the first act of my *Lohengrin* I had assumed that this citadel, which I had imagined as the ancient fortress of Antwerp, would be a rather prominent object from the opposite side of the Scheldt; instead of which, nothing whatever was to be seen but an undiversified plain, with fortifications sunk into the earth. Whenever I saw *Lohengrin* again after this, I could not help smiling at the scene-painter's castle on its stately hill in the background."

The story of Lohengrin, even as we now have it in the earliest form in which it was reduced to writing, is probably a fusion of several mediæval legends; while Wagner, in his turn, has subjected the story to drastic condensation and manipulation for his own purposes. He sets the scene in Brabant, in the plain of the Scheldt.

Henry I of Germany ("The Fowler") has come to enlist a force to help him to fight the Hungarians, who are about to invade his own country. He finds the land in a distracted state. The late ruler of Brabant has left two children, a daughter, Elsa, and a younger brother, Gottfried, the latter being the actual heir to the throne. The guardian of the orphans has been Count Frederick of Telramund, who fell in love with Elsa and asked her hand in marriage. Being refused, he married Ortrud, the daughter of Radbod, Prince of Friesland. Ortrud's ambition has long been to seize the throne of Brabant.

To this political motive is now added that of hatred of her rival, Elsa; and she manages to inspire her husband with something not only of her own resentment against Elsa but of her political ambition. Under the influence of Ortrud, Frederick charges Elsa with having a lover whom she desires to elevate to the throne, with which end in view, he declares, she has spirited away young Gottfried. The truth is that Ortrud has decoyed Gottfried into a forest, and, by her enchantments, changed him into a swan; she has then told her credulous husband that she has seen Elsa drown her brother in a pool.

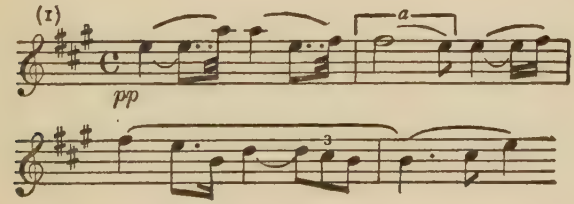
Summoned before King Henry to answer this charge, Elsa makes no defence; and judgment is about to be given against her when Lohengrin, the Knight of the Swan, appears and vanquishes Telramund in combat. Lohengrin, before championing the cause of Elsa, has laid down the condition that she shall never ask his name nor whence he comes; and it is from her inability to keep this promise that the subsequent tragedy comes.

The Grail is the cup in which the Saviour's blood had been poured at His crucifixion. Lost to sinful men for a time, it had finally been entrusted by the angels to the custody of an order of knights hav-

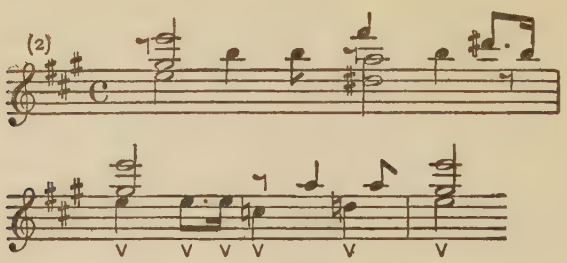
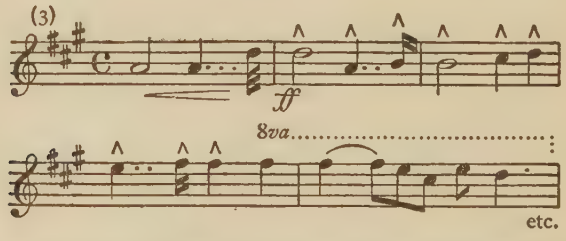
ing their home on Mount Monsalvat. Of one of these, Parzival, Lohengrin is the son.

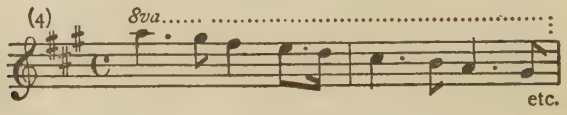
The central motive of the Lohengrin story is probably much older than the Middle Ages. We have a somewhat similar idea in the Greek story of Zeus and Semele; in this, the god loves a mortal woman, who at length, unable to conquer her curiosity, asks that he shall show himself to her as he is. Out of love for her, Zeus grants her wish; but at the revelation of his godlike glory Semele falls dead. In the Lohengrin story the catastrophe comes from Elsa demanding to know Lohengrin's name.

It is not improbable that the remote root of this form of the legend is to be found in the primitive belief that a man's name is part of his own being, and that if a savage discloses his name to a stranger and possible enemy he gives the latter power over his life.

The Prelude to *Lohengrin* is one of Wagner's most perfect conceptions, both in idea and in execution. The spiritual atmosphere of Monsalvat is first established by a few chords in the divided violins, playing high up in their register (reinforced by the flutes); at the fourth bar we hear in the violins the theme representative of the Grail:

The two notes marked (*a*) are specially appropriated later in the opera to the Swan.

This Grail motive is worked out in stately, deliberate fashion, the music slowly descending in the scale, while oboes and clarinets are added to give a slightly deeper colour when the theme is repeated in the key of E, with a syncopated accompaniment above it in the violins. The music flows on placidly into a passage derived from Elsa's prayer (see No. 8 below); it ends with a quotation

from Lohengrin's words to Elsa in the third act, when he asks her if she will give him all her trust:

No. 1 is now resumed in warmer colours than at first, and gradually works up to a great climax:

the highest emotional peak of the whole Prelude being reached at the commencement of the last bar of our quotation, when the whole resources of the orchestra are for a moment brought into play. From this point the music makes a gradual descent by way of the theme of the Farewell of the Angels:



which will be heard later (in the third act), at the close of Lohengrin's Narration; and the Prelude ends, as it began, with a suggestion of the spiritual atmosphere that envelops the Grail.

Wagner's own poetic interpretation of the Prelude is interesting; it may be summarised thus:

" Out of the clear blue ether of the sky there seems to condense a wonderful yet at first hardly perceptible vision; and out of this there gradually emerges, ever more and more clearly, an angel-host bearing in its midst the sacred Grail. As it approaches earth, it pours out exquisite odours, like streams of gold, ravishing the senses of the beholder. The glory of the vision grows and grows until it seems as if the rapture must be shattered and dispersed by the very vehemence of its own expansion.

" The vision draws nearer, and the climax is reached when at last the Grail is revealed in all its glorious reality, radiating fiery beams and shaking the soul with emotion. The beholder sinks on his knees in adoring self-annihilation. The Grail pours out its light on him like a benediction, and consecrates him to its service; then the flames gradually die away, and the angel-host soars up again to the ethereal heights in tender joy, having made pure once more the hearts of men by the sacred blessing of the Grail."

Interesting also is Liszt's description:

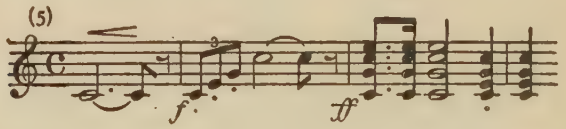
" It begins with a broad, reposeful surface of melody, a vaporous ether gradually unfolding itself, so that the sacred picture may be delineated before our secular eyes. This effect is confided entirely to the violins (divided into eight different desks), which, after some bars of harmony, continue in the highest notes of their register. The motive is afterwards taken up by the softest wind instruments; horns and bassoons are then added, and the way prepared for the entry of the trumpets and trombones, which repeat the melody for the fourth time, with a dazzling brightness of colour, as if in this unique moment the holy edifice had flashed up before our blinded eyes in all its luminous and radiant magnificence.

" But the flood light, that has gradually achieved this solar intensity, now dies rapidly away, like a celestial gleam. The transparent vapour of the clouds retracts, the vision disappears little by little, in the same variegated fragrance from the midst of which it appeared, and the piece ends with a repetition of the first six bars, now become more ethereal still. Its character of ideal mysticism is especially suggested by the long *pianissimo* of the orchestra, only

broken for a moment by the passage in which the brass throw out the marvellous lines of the single motive of the Prelude."

The second act of *Lohengrin*, which was the last of the three to be written, was finished on the 2nd August, 1847. The Prelude was written on the 28th August. This noble piece of music was the last to be written by Wagner for over six years; it was not until October 1853 that he commenced work upon the score of the *Rhinegold*.

When the curtain rises we see a meadow on the banks of the Scheldt near Antwerp. Under the judgment oak sits King Henry; by his side are the Counts and Nobles of his Saxon forces; while opposite them stand the Counts and Nobles of Brabant, with Frederick of Telramund at their head; by his side is Ortrud. A Herald steps out from among the king's retinue into the middle of the stage; he gives a sign, whereupon four of the royal trumpeters blow a summons:



The Herald, in broad diatonic tones, hails the nobles and freemen of Brabant, and tells them that Henry, the German King, has come to speak with them on affairs of state; do they greet him in peace and will they follow his behest? Clashing their arms, the Brabantines signify their acceptance of the terms, and the trumpets ring out once more with their fanfare (No. 5).

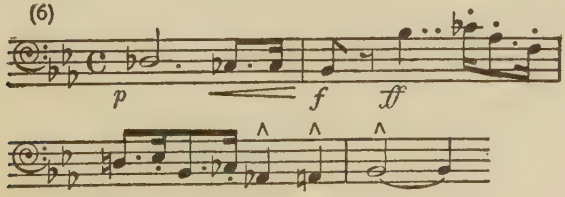
The King rises majestically, gives the Brabantines his blessing, and explains what has brought him among them. Again and again, he says, the wild Eastern tribes have invaded Germany and brought woe upon it; from the farthest borders there goes up a prayer from women and children, "Almighty God, protect us from the Hungarians' rage!" As the head of the State, it is now for him to put an end to this reign of terror. By weight of arms he had been able to impose a nine years' truce upon the enemy, which time he has spent in strengthening the defences of the kingdom. The nine years

have expired; he has refused to pay tribute, and the wild tribes are threatening Germany once more. Now is the time for all loyal men to unite and put an end to this oppression. The Saxons, clashing their weapons together, echo his appeal.

The King resumes his seat, and from his throne tells the people of Brabant that he had come to bid them to Mainz with him, but to his grief he finds them without a ruler and torn by dissension. "You, Frederick of Telramund," he says, "I know of as a knight of famed virtue; speak now, and tell me the cause of all this trouble."

Frederick, first declaring that falsehood is strange to him, tells his story — how the late Duke of Brabant, when dying, made him guardian of his children, Elsa and Gottfried; how tenderly and truly he had fulfilled his duty towards Gottfried, who was the very jewel of his honour; of his grief when he was robbed of his jewel, for Elsa, taking the boy one day to the woods, had returned without him, alleging that, having chanced to wander a little way from him, she had been unable to find trace of him again. They had looked for him everywhere in vain; but when Elsa had been questioned with threats, her pallor and her agitation had betrayed her guilt to all. "Then," he says, "I was filled with horror of the maiden. The right to her hand, that had been conferred on me by her father, I willingly renounced, and took a wife more truly to my mind — Ortrud, daughter of Radbod, Prince of Friesland."

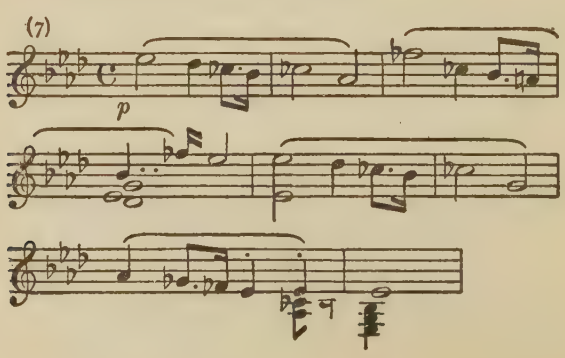
Now he charges Elsa of Brabant with the murder of her brother; and he claims the rulership of the land by right, for he is next of kin to the late Duke, while his wife also is of the race that once gave its princes to the land. His charge against Elsa is accompanied in the orchestra by the Accusation motive:



The men comment on his words in grave, awestruck tones, and the King asks how it is possible that there should be such great guilt in Elsa. Frederick, in growing excitement, tells him that she is given up to dreams, and that her reason for refusing his hand in pride was a secret passion for another. His exasperation still growing, he claims that the reason for her crime was her desire to set her lover on the throne. The King checks his excitement with a grave gesture and bids the accused maiden appear and meet the charge.

The Herald once more comes forward into the middle of the stage, and the fanfare quoted as No. 5 is heard again in the trumpets. The King solemnly hangs his shield on the oak tree, signifying that a court is to be held and that he will not don the shield again till he has given judgment in strictness and in mercy. All the men draw their swords; the Saxons thrust theirs into the earth before them, while the Brabantines lay theirs flat upon the ground; all vow that the swords shall never again be sheathed until the truth has been learned and justice done. In ringing tones, accompanied by softly sounding chords in the brass and wood-wind, the Herald calls upon Elsa to appear.

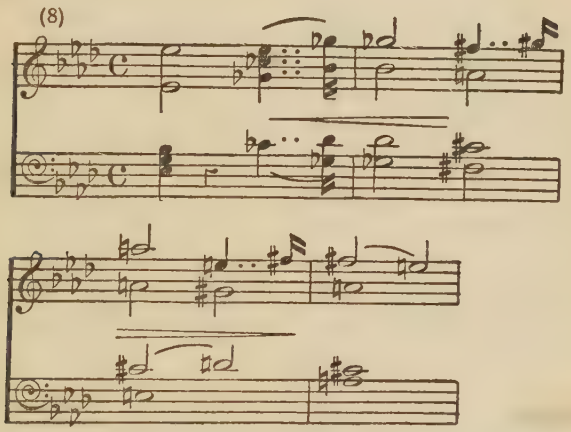
As in *Tannhäuser,* so in *Lohengrin,* Wagner chooses a particular orchestral colouring for particular people or circumstances. We have seen the violins, in their most tenuous tones, used to convey the atmosphere of the Grail; now the purity of Elsa is suggested in the wood-wind colouring of the phrase to which she makes her appearance accompanied by her Ladies:



She remains a little while at the back of the stage, then advances very slowly and timidly to the centre of the foreground; her Ladies do not follow her, but remain at the back, on the outer edge of the judgment circle.

The motive of Elsa's entry (No. 7) runs on into that of her Prayer for Help:

(8)

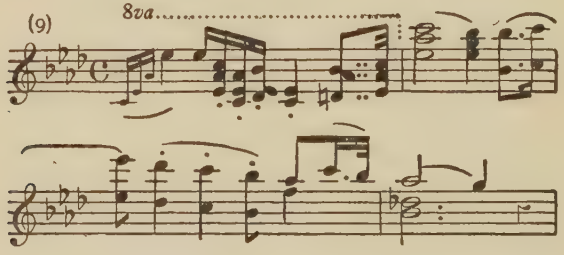


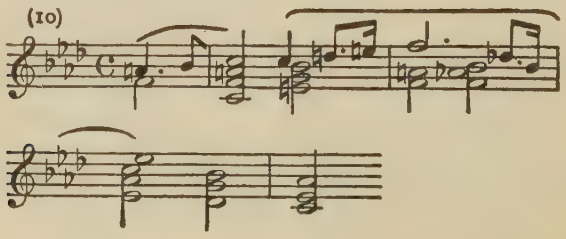
This theme, it will be remembered, has been already hinted at in the Prelude.

The men are prepossessed in her favour; they could not believe in the possibility of any crime being done by one so obviously pure. The King accosts her: " Art thou Elsa of Brabant? " Elsa, without replying, bows her head affirmatively. " Dost thou accept me as thy judge? " asks the King. Elsa turns her head towards him, looks him in the eye, and again, with a trustful gesture, signifies her assent. Is she conscious of the grave charge that has been brought against her? he continues. Elsa throws a glance at Frederick and Ortrud, shudders, droops her head sadly, and again signifies the affirmative. Then what answer has she? asks the King. Still silent, Elsa, by a gesture, answers " Nothing! " Does she then admit her guilt? Elsa gazes for a time sadly before her, and for only answer cries softly to herself, " My hapless brother! "

The King is deeply moved, and asks her if she will not confide in him. There is an expectant silence; then Elsa, gazing tranquilly before her, tells how, when she was praying to heaven in her sorrow, she cried loudly for help, heard the cry echoing in the distance, and then fell into a gentle sleep.

Her rapt self-absorption somewhat awes the men, who ask themselves, in whispers, if she is distraught. The King tries to rouse her from her dream, and bids her defend herself before the court. But Elsa's expression now changes from one of dreamy self-absorption to a sort of spiritual illumination.

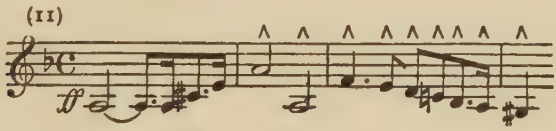
Before she can speak, the violins of the orchestra, giving out the theme of the Holy Grail (No. 1), reveal to us what is in her mind: in a vision she has seen a Knight in shining armour, with a golden horn at his girdle and a sword at his side; his aspect is pure beyond anything she has ever seen. Out of the clouds he came to her, and by signs consoled her: he alone, she says, shall be her champion. As she speaks of this Knight we hear in the orchestra the theme of Lohengrin as the Knight of the Grail:

while the theme of Elsa's Prayer for Help (No. 8) receives a lovely completion:



(Wagner tells us that the wandering modulations of this passage confused some quite good musicians in his own time.)

The King appeals to Frederick to reconsider his charge against Elsa; but Frederick, who all through this scene is the victim of a morbid excitement which we have to attribute to the influence of Ortrud upon him, declares that although he has witnesses of the guilt of Elsa, he scorns to make use of them, preferring to put his accusation to the arbitrament of the sword. He reminds the King of his faithful service to him against the Danes, and the King, assuring him that he has no need of the reminder, consents that the matter shall be decided by combat. He draws his own sword and thrusts it in the earth before him. The trumpets and trombones give out a bold phrase:

(11)



that may perhaps be described as the motive of Ordeal by Combat (by some writers, the motive of Judgment). It is rather curious that the first part of it (the first two bars of our quotation) should so strongly resemble the Sword motive in the *Ring*, while the latter part of the phrase is very like the Treaty motive in that work.

" Now," says Frederick, after the King has asked Elsa if she will trust her cause to the judgment of heaven, and if so, who is to be her defender — " now we shall know the name of her lover! " Elsa has not moved, and her face has preserved its expression of rapt self-absorption. To the strains of No. 8 and No. 10 she declares that her only champion shall be the Knight who appeared to her in a vision and consoled her; to him she will give not only her father's lands and crown but her own hand.

The Herald steps forward with the four trumpeters, whom he orders to stand at the four cardinal points on the outer edge of the judgment ring and blow the challenge. The phrase given out by the trumpets is that of the first part of No. 11. " He who would fight

under the judgment of God for Elsa of Brabant, let him appear! " cries the Herald.

Elsa, whose tranquil air has hitherto not been disturbed, now shows uneasy expectation. She approaches the King and implores him to let the summons be sounded once again; her Knight, she says in all innocence, " dwells so far away that perhaps he has not heard it." At the bidding of the King the four trumpeters again take up their positions and blow their fanfare, after which the Herald repeats his summons, this time in a higher key than before. For a moment there is an impressive silence, and the men, in hushed tones, declare the failure of the champion to appear to be the judgment of heaven.

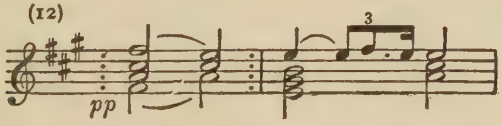
In the orchestra is heard a theme in the clarinets that curiously suggests the theme in the oboe that accompanies Brynhilde's appeal to Wotan at the commencement of the last scene of the *Valkyrie*. Elsa falls on her knees in ardent prayer, while the women, anxious for their lady, come nearer the front of the stage. Elsa passionately implores the Almighty to send to her aid the Knight who appeared to her in her vision. The motive of the Knight of the Grail (No. 9) is heard shimmering in the orchestra, and at once the chorus betray signs of excitement.

Those standing nearest the river bank have caught sight of a boat in the distance, drawn by a swan. The excitement spreads until the whole of the men have made for the background to see the advancing boat, leaving in the foreground only the King, Elsa, Frederick, Ortrud, and the women. The excitement is worked up in magnificent style in both chorus and orchestra; finally all the men rush to the foreground, crying out, " See, he comes! A marvel, a miracle never before seen or heard! "

The King, from his raised place, has seen everything; Frederick and Ortrud are struck motionless with astonishment and terror. Elsa, who has listened to the cries of the men with increasing transport, still remains motionless in the centre of the stage, as if not daring even to look around her. The women fall on their knees and give thanks to heaven. All eyes are turned expectantly towards the background, where at last the boat, drawn by the swan, has reached

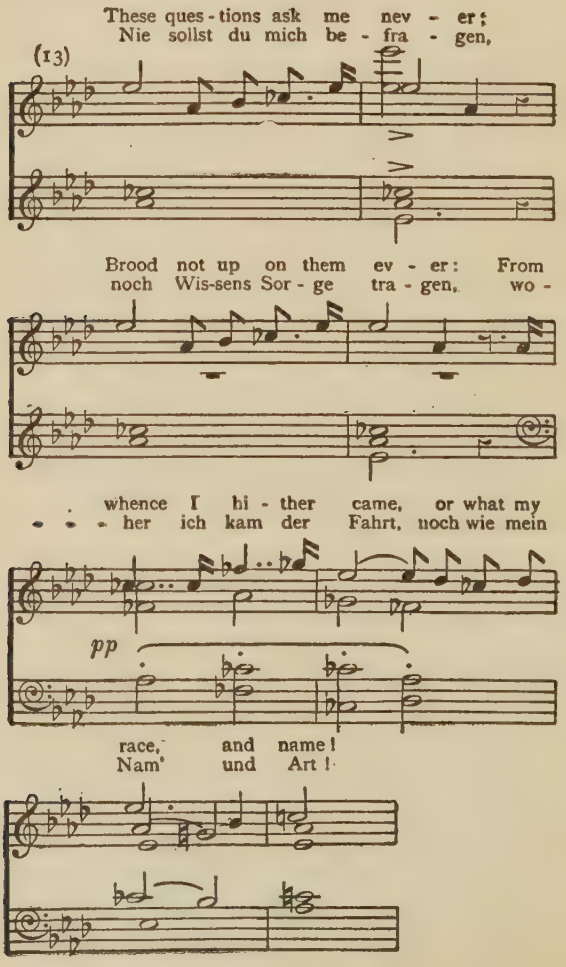
the bank. Within it stands Lohengrin in shining silver armour, helmet on his head, shield on his breast, and a little golden horn at his side; he is leaning upon his sword. Frederick looks at him in speechless astonishment; while Ortrud, who all through the preceding scenes has preserved her cold, proud demeanour, is struck with mortal terror at the sight of the swan. All uncover their heads and are deeply moved. Elsa at last turns round and utters a loud cry at the sight of Lohengrin. The chorus, men and women, greet the Knight in rousing tones.

The rich colours of the orchestra fade away into softly sustained chords in the violins and flutes as at the beginning of the Prelude, and we hear once more the tenuous motive of the Grail (No. 1). As Lohengrin makes his first movement as if to quit the boat, silence falls upon all. Lohengrin, with one foot still in the boat, inclines himself towards the swan; he thanks it for bringing him thither, and bids it take back the boat to the happy land from which they had come. The swan slowly turns the boat round and swims away up the stream, Lohengrin gazing sadly after it for a while. His final farewell is sung to the representative Swan motive:



The chorus express their awe in a brief but highly expressive ensemble, and Lohengrin, leaving the bank, advances slowly and solemnly towards the foreground. He makes his obeisance to the King, hails him, and wishes victory to his sword. He has come, he says, as champion of a maid against whom a grievous accusation has been brought. Then, turning more towards Elsa, he asks her whether, if he fights for her, she will trust entirely in his protection.

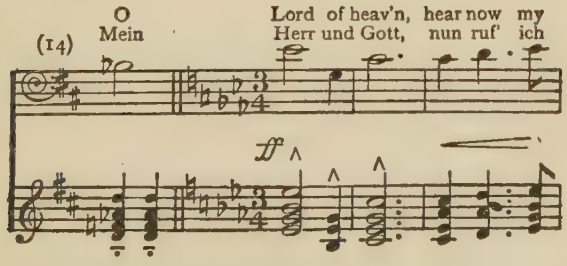
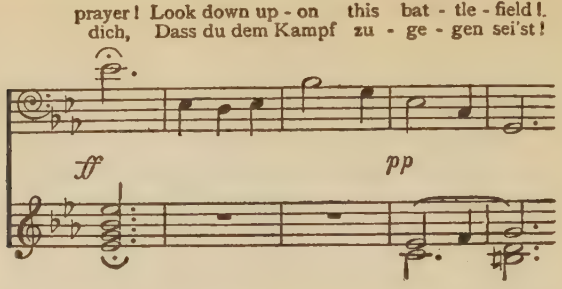
Elsa, who, since she first perceived Lohengrin, has remained motionless, as if spellbound, now throws herself at his feet as if overwhelmed with rapture. She hails him as her hero, and gives herself entirely to him. If heaven grants him the victory, he asks,

will she become his wife? This too she promises at his feet. Further, he asks, if he becomes her husband, will she promise that she will never either ask him certain questions, or even harbour them in her mind — whence he has come, or what his name and nature may be? This he does to the motive of Warning, which becomes of great importance in the later stages of the opera:

These ques - tions ask me nev - er;
Nie sollst du mich be - fra - gen,
(13)
Brood not up on them ev - er: From
noch Wis-sens Sor - ge tra - gen, wo -
whence I hi - ther came, or what my
her ich kam der Fahrt, noch wie mein
pp
race, and name!
Nam' und Art!

Half-unconsciously Elsa gives this promise also, but Lohengrin is not yet fully satisfied. In heightened and more earnest tones he repeats the question and Elsa, gazing up at him fervently, declares herself willing to give herself completely into his hands and obey his every wish. He clasps her to his breast for a moment, then leads her to the King, into whose care he gives her. Then he steps solemnly into the centre of the circle, proclaims his belief in Elsa's innocence, and gives the lie to Frederick.

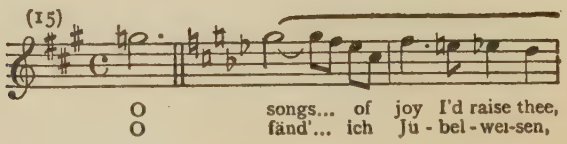
The men urge Frederick to forbear to fight with this emissary from heaven, but he declares violently that he would rather die than yield. He does not fear, he says, this stranger, bold of speech and bearing as he is, and brought thither as he seems to have been by sorcery. He himself has spoken nothing but the truth, and he accepts the challenge.

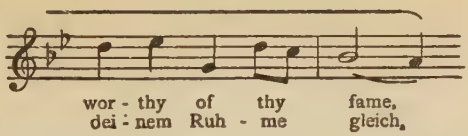
At the bidding of the King, three Saxon Nobles advance for Lohengrin, and three Brabantines for Frederick; they measure out the field of combat, and having made a complete circle thrust their spears into the ground. The Herald advances into the centre of the space, and, to the Judgment motive (No. 11), orders that none shall interfere in the fight; whoever does so shall, if he be a freeman, forfeit a hand, and if a serf, lose his life.

The King, with great solemnity, advances to the centre, and while all bare their heads he prays to heaven to look down upon the fight and declare itself in favour of the truth. The prayer, which commences thus:



is a noble piece of quasi-religious writing; it is taken up by the whole of the chorus and by the other principals, and developed at some length. (The reader may notice that this is the first of our quotations in 3/4 time. It is a singular fact that the whole of *Lohengrin,* with the exception of this passage, is written in duple metre; and it is remarkable what variety of expression Wagner has managed to draw from this metre alone.)

In deep and solemn emotion all return to their places, the six witnesses remaining by the ring with their spears, the remainder of the men grouping themselves around. Elsa and her Ladies are in the foreground under the oak with the King. At a sign from the Herald the trumpeters blow the call to battle (No. 5); the fight is conducted to the accompaniment of the motive of Judgment (No. 11). Lohengrin, with a mighty stroke, fells Frederick, who, after an attempt to recover himself, staggers back a few paces and falls to the ground. Lohengrin spares his life, and bids him depart and repent of his crime. The warriors resume their swords and sheath them; the witnesses withdraw the spears from the earth, and the King takes down his shield from the oak. All rush joyfully to the battleground, while Elsa, hastening to Lohengrin, breaks out into a song of joy and gratitude:

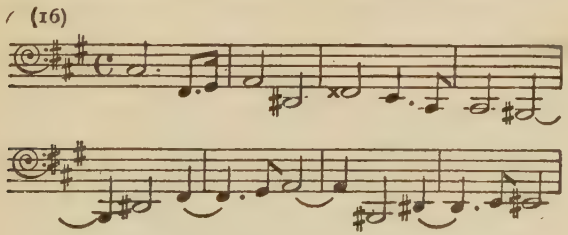




which is developed into a brilliant ensemble. Some of the young men raise Lohengrin upon his own shield and Elsa upon the King's, and they are carried off with shouts of jubilation.

When the curtain rises for the second act we find ourselves in the citadel of Antwerp. At the back is the Pallas (the Knights' quarters); in the left of the foreground the women's quarters (the Kemenate); on the right is the cathedral. It is night. Ortrud and Frederick, both in sombre and wretched clothes — for they have lost their rank — are seen sitting on the cathedral steps: Frederick is sunk in gloomy brooding; Ortrud keeps her eyes fixed on the brightly-lit windows of the Pallas.

After a couple of bars of *tremolando* in the kettledrums we hear in the 'cellos the sinister theme of Ortrud's Witchcraft:

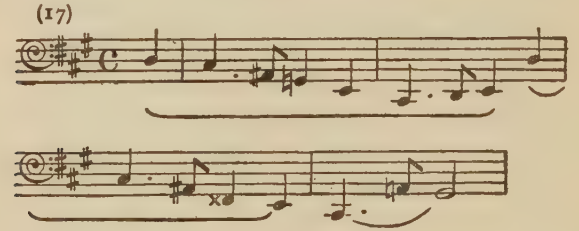


In the character of Ortrud Wagner intended, in the first place, to set over against the spiritual world of Lohengrin and the more earthly purity of Elsa a symbol of pagan evil, and in the second place to depict a woman who is immune from the ordinary weaknesses of her sex.

He has analysed her in a letter to Liszt, in which he says: " Ortrud is a woman who does not know love. . . . Politics are her essence. The political *man* is repulsive; the political *woman* is horrible, and it is this horror I have to represent. There is a kind of love in this woman, the love of the past, of dead generations, the

terribly insane love of an ancestral pride, which finds its expression in the hatred of everything living, actually existing." The less strong-minded Frederick is simply a tool in her hands.

After No. 16 has gone its writhing way, we hear in the wind instruments the Warning motive (No. 13), and after that, again in the 'cellos, the motive of Doubt:

(17)

symbolizing the doubt of Lohengrin that Ortrud means to sow in the heart of Elsa. The development of these motives is broken for a moment by festal music heard from within the Pallas; then Frederick rises hurriedly and bids the "companion of my shame" arouse herself that they may leave before the dawn discloses them to all.

A violent quarrel ensues between the pair. Frederick is not yet lost to all sense of honour; he sees that it is Ortrud's wiles that have brought his misfortunes on him, and he pours out a passionate lament over his lost honour. He regrets that, his sword having been taken from him, he cannot slay her. Ortrud, who never loses her sinister composure, asks him with quiet scorn why he has lost his faith in her. Frederick, in reply, runs over the tale of her lies and schemings. She denies nothing, but reproaches him with cowardice in his combat with Lohengrin, and derides his excuse that heaven was on the side of his opponent.

Gradually she establishes her ascendancy over him once more. Nobody, she says, knows who this Knight is who has come among them guided by a swan; his power resides in the mystery that surrounds him; for him to have to declare his name and station would be the ending of the spell. No one but Elsa has the power to draw his secret from him; it is she, then, who must be wrought upon to ask the fatal questions. To awaken her suspicions, Lohengrin must

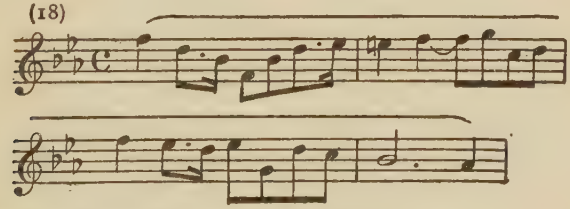
be charged with sorcery. Through her black art Ortrud knows that Lohengrin is not invulnerable, and that if the smallest wound be made in his body all his might will ebb away.

Frederick's anger rises again at the thought that it was only through magic that he was brought to shame before the court; he will do anything to wipe out his degradation, but woe to Ortrud if she is deceiving him once more! Ortrud contemptuously calms him, and the pair, seated side by side, break out into a sinister appeal to the powers of darkness and a warning to the happy ones within the citadel to beware of the ruin that is lying in wait for them.

As the strains of their duet die away, a door on the balcony of the Kemenate opens, and Elsa appears in a white robe; she advances to the balustrade and leans her head on her hand; Frederick and Ortrud, unseen by her, remain sitting on the cathedral steps.

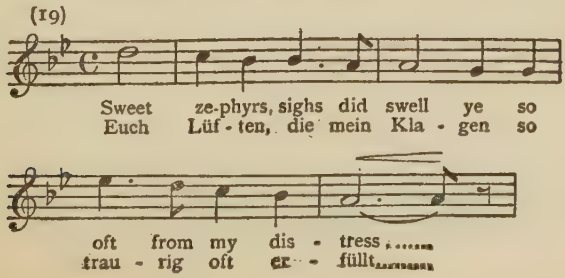
By means of one of those magical changes of orchestral colour in which Wagner was so skilled he substitutes in a moment the serenely pure atmosphere of Elsa for the murk that envelops the minds of Ortrud and her husband. Elsa has come to pour out to the night air the fullness of her happiness. The clarinet gives out the placid motive of Elsa's Bliss:

(18)



after which she herself takes up the strain:

(19)

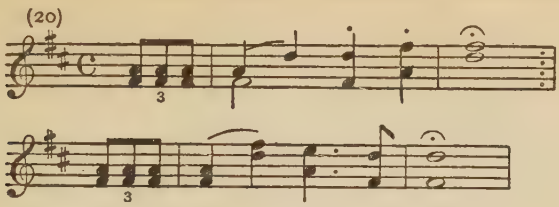


Ortrud sees her opportunity. In a whisper she sends Frederick away, telling him to leave Elsa with her, the Knight being for him. Frederick withdraws and disappears in the background.

Ortrud breaks in upon Elsa's ecstasy with a loud wail of "Elsa!" Having attracted Elsa's attention, she appeals to her sympathy; how, she asks, has she ever harmed the maiden? Frederick indeed has wronged her in his madness, but now he is broken with remorse. She contrasts her own misery with the happiness of Elsa, and so works upon the latter's sympathy that she leaves the balcony to descend and open the door to Ortrud. The moment she has disappeared, Ortrud leaps up from the steps in a frenzy, and sends out a wild appeal to the pagan gods to help her: "Odin! On thee, strong one, I call! Freia! Hear me, exalted one! Hallow my feigning and my lies; grant me sweet vengeance!"

Her manner changes when Elsa comes upon the scene from the lower door; Ortrud throws herself at her feet in hypocritical humility, and Elsa is shocked at the wretched appearance of her rival. When her noble Knight leads her to the altar, she says, she will intercede with the King for the hapless pair. Gradually, to the accompaniment of the motives of Doubt and Warning, Ortrud insinuates the question, "What if he should some day leave thee, magically departing as he magically came?" Elsa, after a momentary show of indignation, turns sorrowfully and compassionately to Ortrud, and tells her that one like her can never know the bliss of perfect faith. She invites her into the Kemenate, and the two voices blend in a lovely duet, in which, while Elsa sings of her own happiness and trust, Ortrud, in an aside, tells us of a plan by which she will drag Elsa's pride in the dust. With hypocritical reluctance she accompanies Elsa through the little door into the Kemenate.

Frederick now advances from the background, and after the ominous remark, "Thus evil enters yonder house!" he pours out his hatred of Elsa and Lohengrin. Day gradually dawning, he hides himself behind a buttress of the cathedral. Two watchmen on the terrace blow the reveille, which is answered from a distant tower:



The brazen fanfare and their echoes continue for some time, while the watchmen descend and open the gate, and servants and retainers enter and go quietly about their daily duties. The doors of the Pallas open, and the four trumpeters of the King advance and blow their call (No. 5), after which they re-enter the Pallas.

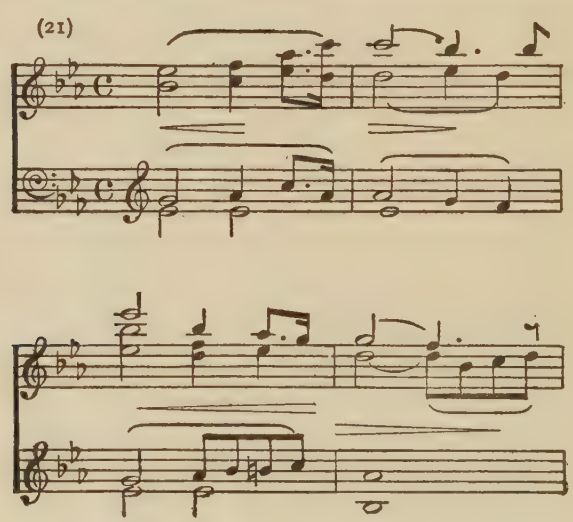
The servants have by now quitted the stage, which gradually fills with the Nobles and other inhabitants of the fortress, entering from all quarters. After an eight-part chorus of the men, in joyful anticipation of a day of rejoicing, and praise of the mysterious Knight who has wrought such a wonder, the Herald, stepping out on to the elevation before the gate of the Pallas, proclaims the King's decree of disgrace and banishment against Frederick and all who help or harbour him. The men express their approval of the decree, and the Herald continues with the announcement that the god-sent stranger who has won the hand of Elsa, since he declines the title of Duke, shall henceforth be known as the Guardian of Brabant. Again the chorus express their joy, after which the Herald, in solemn tones, gives them a message from Lohengrin: this day he will hold his wedding-feast with them, but on the morrow he will lead them, with the King, to battle. There is another joyous outburst from the chorus, followed by an episode that is generally omitted in performance, though it is vital to the understanding of the subsequent course of the drama.

While the people are moving about in happy excitement, four Nobles, former adherents of Frederick, draw together and in furtive tones cast doubts on the advisability of the expedition. Frederick comes forward and stands before them, uncovers his head, and tells them of his intention to challenge Lohengrin's power and accuse him of sorcery. The Nobles hurry him away from the

sight of the populace as four Pages enter from the door of the Kemenate on to the balcony, run briskly down the stairs, and station themselves on the terrace in front of the Pallas. They bid the crowd make way for Elsa of Brabant, who is about to proceed to the cathedral.

Soon a long procession of women splendidly attired advances slowly from the door of the Kemenate on the balcony, and makes its way towards the cathedral to a solemn strain in the orchestra:

(21)



to which is added the motive of Elsa's Bliss (No. 18). When Elsa herself appears, the Nobles bare their heads in reverence. A superb ensemble, at once majestic and grave, is built up in chorus and orchestra.

As Elsa is about to ascend the steps of the cathedral, Ortrud, who has hitherto been in the background among the Ladies, rushes forward and confronts her. She now throws off the mask; never, she declares, will she, whose right it is to lead, follow Elsa as a menial; it is Elsa who should bow before her. She avers her faith in her husband, who has been falsely judged; but can Elsa show a similar faith in *her* hero, whose name even she does not know? In face of

the protests of all she presses home this point, insisting that no one knows the race to which Lohengrin belongs, or even if he is of noble birth; whence did the river bear him, whither will it take him back again some day? Elsa passionately declares her faith in her deliverer, and the chorus support her; but Ortrud repeats her taunts more venomously than before.

At last the door of the Pallas opens, and the four trumpeters of the King advance and sound their instruments, bidding the crowd make way for the King, who enters accompanied by Lohengrin and the Saxon Counts and Nobles. Elsa, greatly agitated, throws herself on Lohengrin's breast; perceiving Ortrud, he understands the cause of her trouble. He sternly orders Ortrud to leave them, and taking Elsa under his protection he turns with her and the King to lead the procession to the cathedral.

All are about to follow, when Frederick suddenly appears on the cathedral steps; the Ladies and Pages start back in horror at the sight of him. Frederick makes a last appeal to the King to be heard, and, like Ortrud, charges Lohengrin with sorcery; but at a word of command from the King he is seized by the men. In the wildest excitement he urges them to demand from Lohengrin his name and station. For a moment the faith of the crowd is shaken; even the King is not without a certain sympathy for Frederick.

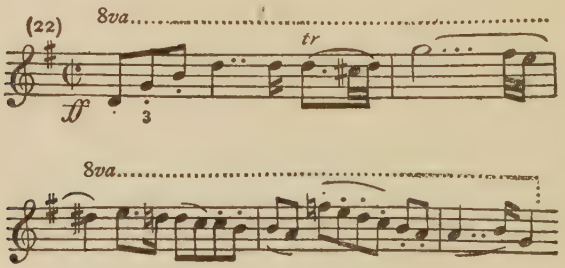
Lohengrin proudly refuses to answer him, declaring that not even at the bidding of the King would he reveal himself; to one alone he is answerable — Elsa. When he turns to her, however, he is dismayed to find that she too is perturbed. All the conflicting emotions of the situation are summed up in a fine ensemble, during which we are made to feel that Elsa, though still trusting Lohengrin, cannot quite repress the doubts that have been sown in her by Ortrud.

While the King and the men are expressing their faith in Lohengrin, Frederick creeps up to Elsa and softly tells her how she can put Lohengrin to the test; let Frederick wound him ever so slightly, even to the cutting off of the tip of his finger, and all that the Knight is concealing shall be revealed; then, giving her all his confidence, he will never leave her. He, Frederick, will be near her that night; let her call him, and what has to be done will be done quickly.

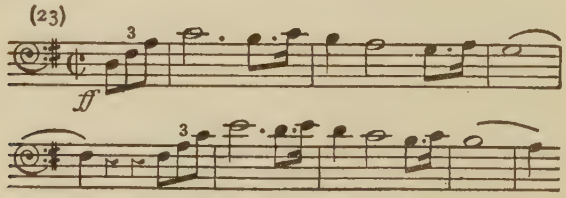
Elsa, though visibly shaken, refuses, and Lohengrin, coming forward, in a terrible voice bids Ortrud and Frederick depart from her and never let his eyes light upon them again.

Once more he appeals to Elsa to have faith in him, and once more, in shame and confusion, she promises him her fealty. Then, conducted by the King, Lohengrin and Elsa slowly advance to the cathedral to the solemn strains of No. 21. On the highest step, Elsa turns, deeply moved, to Lohengrin, who takes her in his arms. Modestly starting from his embrace, she turns round and catches sight of Ortrud, who raises her arm against her as if in triumph. Elsa, terrified, averts her face, the Warning motive rings out in the brass, and as the King, Elsa, and Lohengrin enter the cathedral the curtain falls.

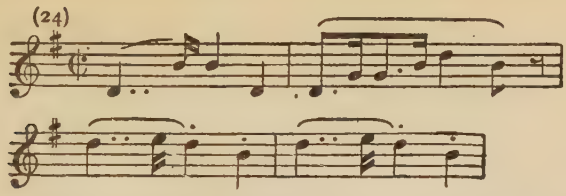
The brilliant orchestral introduction to the third act is descriptive of the wedding festivities. The first section of it is based on two chief themes, one of which is dashed into by the orchestra at once:



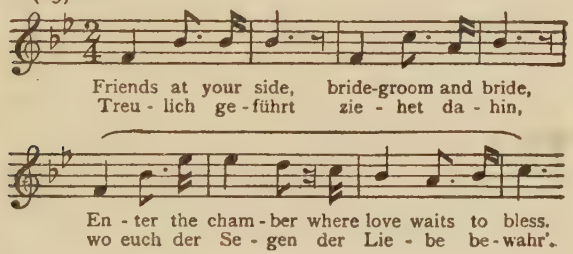
while the second:



is given out in heavy colours by the 'cellos, bassoons, and horns underneath hammering triplet chords in the violins. There follows a middle section, devoted to a quieter strain:

(24)

which, from its predominantly wood-wind colour, and knowing Wagner as we do, we may perhaps associate more particularly with the feminine element of the wedding. Nos. 22 and 23 are then resumed; the music rises to a climax, then dies away, and merges gradually into the Wedding Chorus.

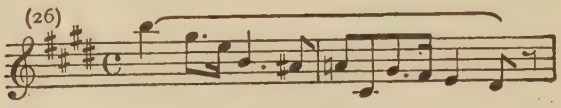
The scene is the bridal chamber. On the right is an open window in a recess. From behind the scenes comes the sound of music; the chorus are giving their blessing to the newly-married pair:

(25)

Friends at your side, bride-groom and bride,
Treu - lich ge - führt zie - het da - hin,
En - ter the cham - ber where love waits to bless.
wo euch der Se - gen der Lie - be be - wahr'.

The strains draw nearer, and midway through the chorus the doors on each side at the back are opened and the Ladies enter conducting Elsa, while the King, with the men, escorts Lohengrin. The two processions meet in the centre of the stage. Elsa is led to Lohengrin: the pair embrace, and are relieved by pages of their heavy upper garments. The King embraces and blesses Lohengrin and Elsa; the pages give the signal for departure, and the two processions re-form and pass out. When they have completely disappeared, with the tones of the Wedding Chorus dying away in the distance, Elsa, filled with happy emotion, falls upon Lohengrin's breast. He seats himself on a couch by the window and draws her tenderly to him.

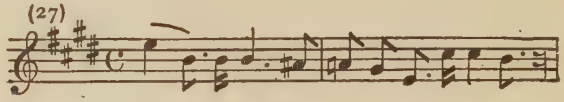
Then commences the long and beautiful duet that is the finest piece of writing of its kind that Wagner has given us in this, his first main period. As Lohengrin speaks of the outer world being shut out from them like a dream we hear a tender, intimate phrase in the oboe:

(26)



while Elsa expresses the depth of her bliss in a graciously flowing melody:

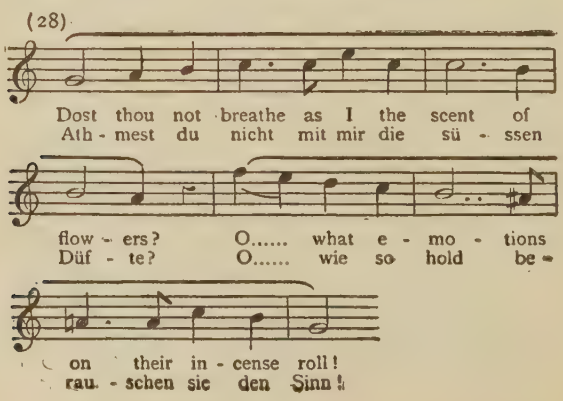
(27)



which is afterwards taken up by Lohengrin and made the occasion of a brief blending of the two voices.

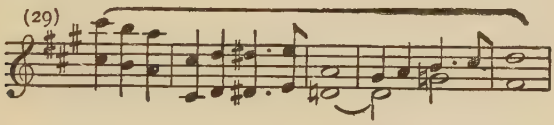
But soon Ortrud's poison begins to work. How sweet, says Elsa, her name sounds in Lohengrin's mouth! Perhaps some day she shall learn his — some time when they are alone together and the ears of the world are closed. Lohengrin, without answering her directly, embraces her gently and points through the open window to the flower garden, and compares the charm of the flowers to that which binds his heart to hers:

(28)


Dost thou not breathe as I the scent of
Ath - mest du nicht mit mir die sü - ssen
flow - ers? O..... what e - mo - tions
Düf - te? O..... wie so hold be -
on their in - cense roll!
rau - schen sie den Sinn!

He reminds her that when he came to her rescue he knew her not nor asked to know her; he had seen her, and his heart had understood everything. Elsa, at his gentle chiding, hides her confusion on his breast. But against her own will the fateful question keeps forcing itself to her lips: she is faithful to him, she says; will he not reveal to her in secret whence he came?

Again he implores her to have trust in him, and breaks out into a new strain of tenderness:

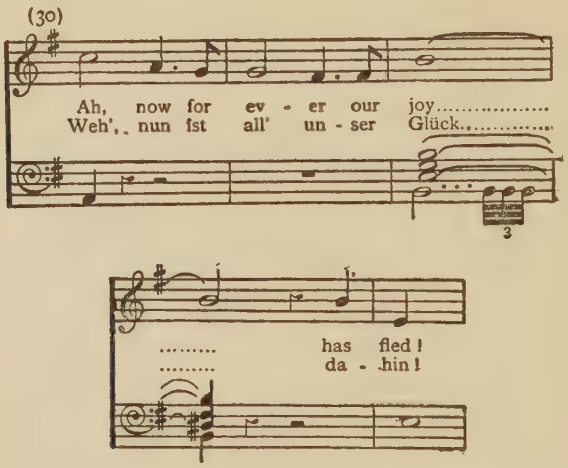


To him, he assures her, her love and confidence are reward sufficient for all he has done; will she not return him these? " I come not out of the night and sorrow, but from a land of light and joy." We hear the Doubt motive in the orchestra (No. 17) as Elsa seizes upon his words to press her question home again; if he has come from so glorious a home, what power can one so humble as she have to hold him?

In vain he begs her not to torment herself and him; but she cannot banish from her mind this new thought of his possible departure. Gazing wildly before her, in a kind of trance, she fancies she sees once more the swan approaching up the river to take her lover away. Finally, losing command of herself completely, she conjures him to say who he is and what is his name. Before he can reply she sees, through an open door at the back, Frederick and his four companions advancing with drawn swords. With a shriek she warns Lohengrin and hurriedly reaches him his sword, which is resting against the couch. As Frederick is aiming a blow at him, Lohengrin strikes him dead; the terrified Nobles let their swords fall, and sink on their knees before him. Elsa throws herself upon Lohengrin's breast, and then sinks to the ground in a swoon.

There is another of those long silences with which Wagner knows so well how to create an effect of emotional tension; then Lohen-

grin, deeply moved, sums up the whole tragedy in one expressive sentence:



As he bends over Elsa, raises her gently, and places her on the couch, we hear in the soft tones of the orchestra a sorrowful reminiscence of a theme from the love-duet (No. 27).

At a sign from Lohengrin the four Nobles rise and bear away the body of Frederick, the orchestra giving out once more the theme of Judgment (No. 11). Lohengrin strikes a bell: two women enter, whom he orders to dress and adorn Elsa and lead her before the King; there he will tell her all she has desired to know. Slowly and sadly he goes out, while the women lead off Elsa, who is still incapable of speech; and in the orchestra we hear the terrible Warning motive (No. 13) as the curtain descends for a moment.

Trumpet fanfares are heard behind the scenes, as if from the courtyard, and when the curtain rises again we see once more the meadow on the banks of the Scheldt as in Act I. Day is dawning. To stirring martial music the Nobles and their troops enter and take up their positions under their respective banners; finally the King arrives with his Saxons. He congratulates them on their loyalty and offers to lead them against his enemy. But where, he

asks, is the Knight whom heaven has sent to be the glory of Brabant?

Before an answer can be given to his quest the crowd is thrown into commotion by the entry of the four Nobles with the body of Frederick on a bier. "It is the will of the Guardian of Brabant," they say; "soon we shall know more." Elsa, accompanied by her Ladies, now enters and comes forward with slow, vacillating steps; the King meets her and conducts her to a seat opposite to the oak. She is incapable of speech; she can only look up to him pathetically, while in the orchestra we hear the theme of her Prayer for Help (No. 8), to which, however, a melancholy turn is now given by its being phrased in the minor.

There is a great stir in the background, and Lohengrin, armed exactly as in the first act, enters, and strides gravely and solemnly to the front. The King and the warriors think he has come to lead them to battle; but he has, he tells them, sad tidings for them. He cannot accompany them to the war; he has come, in the first place, to be declared justified in slaying Frederick, whose corpse, to the general horror, he uncovers. All absolve him.

But, he goes on, he has another complaint to make in the ears of all the world; the wife whom heaven has given him has allowed herself to be led into betraying him; lending ear to evil counsel, she has broken her oath. No longer shall the truth be concealed; "Hear," he says, "whether my nobility is not equal to yours." Then, accompanied by the Grail motive (No. 1), he tells them of the castle on Monsalvat in which a company of sinless men have custody of the Grail, and how the sacred vessel arms its chosen servants with supernatural power, so that magic cannot prevail against them. They are protected in their fight for the virtuous and oppressed so long as they remain unknown; for so pure and rare is the blessing conferred by the Grail that none of its Knights can remain among men when once he becomes known.

He himself is one of these Knights — his father is Parzival, he himself is Lohengrin. His final words are enriched by the theme of Lohengrin as the Knight of the Grail (No. 9).

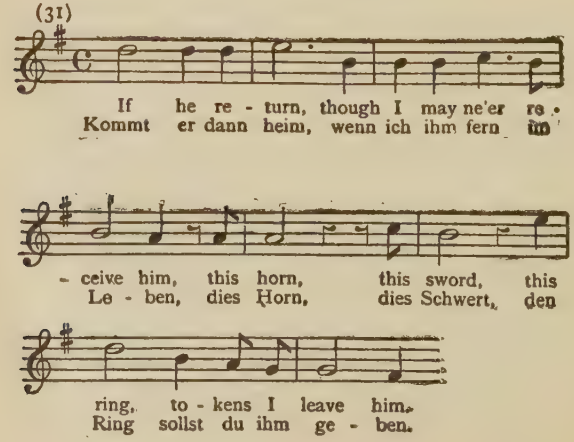
All are deeply moved, and their emotion finds expression in a

brief chorus on the descending motive of Farewell (No. 4). The distracted Elsa gives full voice to her remorse and despair, and it is in vain that Lohengrin tries to comfort her. Remorse is of no avail now, nor, he tells the King and the warriors, can he share the coming combat with them; he gives them, however, the assurance that no Eastern hordes shall ever again oppress the German lands.

There is again wild excitement among the men nearest the bank, and Elsa, awaking from her swoon, sees, with them, the swan approaching again, drawing the empty boat. Lohengrin bends sorrowfully over the swan. In the orchestra we hear the Swan motive (No. 12), as Lohengrin sings his last sad greeting to it. This will be their last journey together, he says; soon its year of service would have been ended, and then, set free by the might of the Grail, it would have been transformed. With a heart-breaking cry he turns to Elsa, and explains that had she but trusted him for a year the Grail would have restored to her her brother, Gottfried, whom she has thought dead.

All are astonished at the news. Handing Elsa his horn, sword, and ring, he bids her give them to Gottfried if ever he should return — the horn to help him in the hour of danger, the sword to win him victory in battle, the ring to remind him of one who served both him and Elsa in their hour of need:

(31)


If he re - turn, though I may ne'er re -
Kommt er dann heim, wenn ich ihm fern im
- ceive him, this horn, this sword, this
Le - ben, dies Horn, dies Schwert, den
ring, to - kens I leave him.
Ring sollst du ihm ge - ben.

Repeatedly kissing Elsa, who is incapable of movement, he bids her a passionate farewell, and goes quickly up the bank; but before he can step into the boat Ortrud advances, and in triumph tells him that by the chain round the swan's neck she recognises it as the young Gottfried who had been transformed by her sorceries; thanks to Elsa's betrayal it is this very swan that shall now take her Knight away from her again.

Lohengrin sinks on his knees in silent prayer; and in the orchestra we hear the Grail theme (No. 1) as the white dove of the Grail hovers over the boat. Lohengrin, perceiving it, with a look of gratitude springs up and unfastens the chain, whereupon the swan immediately sinks, while in its place Lohengrin raises to the bank a beautiful youth in gleaming silver garments. " Behold," says Lohengrin, " the Duke of Brabant, your leader! "

At the sight of Gottfried, Ortrud has sunk down with a shriek. Lohengrin springs quickly into the boat, which the dove, seizing the chain, draws down the stream. Gottfried comes forward and makes obeisance to the King, and the warriors bow before him in homage. Then he hastens to Elsa's arms; after a moment of rapture she looks wistfully towards the shore, but Lohengrin is no longer visible.

As she gives a last despairing cry of " My husband! My husband! " Lohengrin reappears once more for a moment in the distance, standing in the boat with drooping head, leaning on his shield. Elsa falls lifeless into Gottfried's arms as Lohengrin slowly recedes in the distance.

TRISTAN AND ISOLDE

THE first idea of an opera on the Tristan subject came to Wagner in 1854, but he did not begin to work seriously at the theme until the summer of 1857. Recognising that the *Ring* was not only going to occupy him for some years yet, but that, when ready, it would be almost impossible to produce it under then existing conditions, he planned *Tristan and Isolde* as a more practicable work for the ordinary German theatre. The score was finished in August 1859; but it had to wait until the 10th June, 1865, for its first performance (in Munich, under Hans von Bülaw).

Of all Wagner's operas, *Tristan and Isolde* is the most difficult to understand; even after years of acquaintance with it one cannot be quite sure that Wagner's intention has been grasped at every point. There is a good deal in the poem that is obscure; if the motives of his characters were invariably clear to the composer, as we are bound to assume was the case, he has occasionally failed to make them perfectly clear to the spectator, or even to the careful student of the text. While there are few operas more popular, there is probably not one that is the subject of so much misconception on the part of its admirers.

As usual with Wagner, the drama is a synthesis of legends from various sources. The Tristan story is an old one, and apparently Celtic in origin. In its main outlines it runs thus in the most ancient versions we possess, that date from the thirteenth century.

Tristan is the son of a King of Parmenia named Rivalin, who makes his way to the court of King Marke in Cornwall and marries

the King's sister, Blanchefleur. Rivalin is killed in battle, and Blanchefleur's sorrow is so great that she dies, in the fortress of Kanoël overseas, in giving birth to Tristan, whose name is thus descriptive of the unhappy circumstances in which he first saw the light. Tristan is brought up by his tutor Kurvenal.

In the course of his adventures he reaches King Marke's court at Tintagel, where he is recognised as the King's nephew and treated with great honour. After his return from a war in Parmenia he finds that Cornwall has been conquered by the Irish King Gurmun, and that the latter's brother-in-law, Morold, has come to collect the tribute agreed upon. Tristan challenges Morold to single combat, slays him, and sends his head to Ireland in scorn and defiance.

But Morold's sword has dealt Tristan a poisoned wound, for the healing of which he has to go to Ireland, there to be treated by the magic art of Isot, wife of Gurmun. He visits Ireland disguised as a merchant (or a minstrel) named Tantris, is healed and made tutor of the Queen's daughter, Isot the Fair, and at length returns to Cornwall, where he finds himself caught up in political complications. A party among the nobles is bent on deposing the childless old King Marke. Tristan, as the latter's nephew, is the heir to the throne; but out of fear for his own safety he persuades King Marke, against his will, to marry, proposing Isot the Fair as bride. Once more he goes to Ireland.

He wins the country's gratitude by slaying a dragon that is ravaging the land, but is afterward recognised by the two Isots as Tantris: moreover, in his sword they find a notch that corresponds with a splinter that had been left in the head of Morold, whose slayer Tristan is now seen to have been. Isot the Fair goes to slay him in his bath with his own sword, but he manages to buy his life with the promise to find her a rich husband.

The Queen, before the pair set out on the voyage to Cornwall, prepares and gives to Isot's maid Brangaene a love-philtre which is to be secretly given to King Marke and Isot on their wedding-day. On the ship Isot does not conceal her hatred of Tristan, but one day, when the pair are thirsty, they accidentally drink the

philtre and fall violently in love with each other. When they reach Cornwall, Brangaene, who is in the secret, takes Isot's place in the King's bed. The lovers deceive the old King in various ways, till at length Tristan has to leave the court.

He flies to Sussex, where he falls in love with and marries the reigning Duke's daughter, Isot of the White Hand. After various other adventures Tristan is wounded in battle. No one can heal him but Isot of Ireland; she is sent for, and it is arranged that the messenger who has gone on the quest is to hoist a blue-and-white sail if she returns in the ship with him, a black sail if he has failed. The blue-and-white sail is hoisted, but the jealous Isot of the White Hand tells the sick man that the sail is black. He dies, and Isot the Fair after him, holding him in her embrace. Isot of the White Hand malignantly buries them on opposite sides of the church, so that even in death they should not be united; but from each grave there springs a mighty oak, and the branches of the two meet over the roof of the church.

All this is very crude, in the mediæval way, and Wagner had to simplify and spiritualise it all to make it a worthy subject for modern musical treatment. He reduces the two Isots to one, and for the raw mediæval motive of a hulking thickhead of a warrior and an amorous woman playing their common tricks on an old husband he substituted the motive of a love that is not, and by its nature never can be, satisfied.

It is not clear from Wagner's text whether Isolde really marries King Marke at all, but the indications are that she does not; and so far are Tristan and Isolde from being the conventional lovers of operatic romance, gratifying a guilty passion and singing melodiously about it for our benefit, that their whole pathos and their whole tragedy are that a union between them is for ever impossible: Tristan's honour stands in the way of that.

To save that honour he is at all times ready to die; it is to the last convulsive effort to preserve it that he owes his death. There could be no more grievous misunderstanding of the opera than to suppose it to be a magnificent musical glorification of illicit love.

Wagner makes the slain Morold the betrothed of Isolde, and

the very centre of the drama is an incident that does not occur in it, but is only mentioned. When Isolde raised the sword to slay Tristan, having recognised him, through his disguise, as the slayer of Morold, the sick and helpless knight turned on her a look that made her pause, and then caused the sword to fall from her hands. This " Look " has been variously interpreted. Some writers hold that Isolde has read in Tristan's eyes an unconfessed love for her, others that she loves him also, but as yet is unaware of it herself. The point is, indeed, an obscure one; all we can be certain about is that it is from the " Look " that the drama as we see it on the stage takes its origin.

It is generally supposed that the inspirer of *Tristan and Isolde* was Mathilde Wesendonck, the young wife of the Swiss silk merchant Otto Wesendonck, in whose beautiful home overlooking the lake of Zürich Wagner found refuge from April 1857 to August 1858; but we may take it as certain that the opera would have been written had he never met the lady.

It is less probable, indeed, that he wrote *Tristan and Isolde* because he was in love with Mathilde than that he was in love with Mathilde because he was writing *Tristan and Isolde*. But that she was closely associated in his mind with the opera is beyond question. A selection from his letters to her has been published that throws considerable light on his intentions and his ideals in writing the work. In the winter of 1857–8 Frau Wesendonck wrote five poems which Wagner set to music, drawing largely for his material on the themes of the opera; one of them the *Träume* (*Dreams*), is virtually a whole section from the duet in the second act.

The Prelude to *Tristan and Isolde* does not, like that to the *Mastersingers*, set forth the coming drama in detail, but, like the Prelude to *Lohengrin*, gives us the spiritual essence of the drama in a highly concentrated form. Wagner's instinct in these matters was unerring. In the *Mastersingers* the action is incessantly changing, and the Prelude could fitly take up the themes representing the chief characters and incidents and weave them all into one big tapestry. But in *Tristan and Isolde* hardly anything " happens," in the ordinary theatrical sense of the word. The tragedy comes

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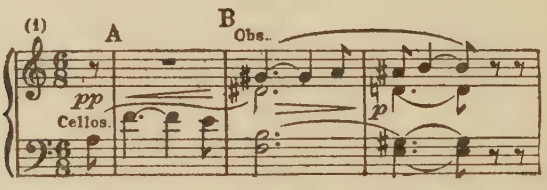
about not because of what happens to the fated pair, but because of what they are; *Tristan and Isolde* is a drama of spiritual states, not of outward actions. The Prelude is a slow, inexorable working out of one sad mood in all its sweet and bitter implications.

It commences with an unharmonised line high up in the 'cellos, that is completed by harmonies in the oboes, clarinets, English horn and bassoons:

The reader who knows this passage only from a pianoforte arrangement of the Prelude must be careful not to imagine that the melodic line is one throughout, running from the opening A in the bass clef to the final B in the treble. In the orchestral score, and in performance, the seemingly single motive becomes two.

The 'cello motive is A, F, E, D sharp (which is here written in the treble clef only for the convenience of the pianist); on the D sharp the English horn strikes in and carries the motive to its conclusion on the D natural.

The other motive — a most important one in the opera — is made up of G sharp, A, A sharp and B in the oboes. It is unfortunate that Wagner did not label his themes himself; as it is, different commentators give different names to many of them, according to the later passages in the score with which they more particularly identify them, or the meaning they read into these passages.

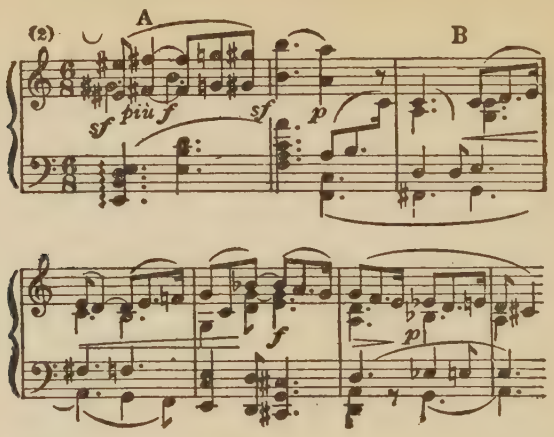
No. 1A will be referred to in the following analysis as the Grief or Sorrow motive, though it must be understood that its expression is too complex to be tied down to one descriptive word: it has in it something of pain, something of resignation, something of hopelessness, and much more. No. 1B is called by some writers the Desire motive, by others the motive of Isolde's Magic; we shall adopt the latter description of it.

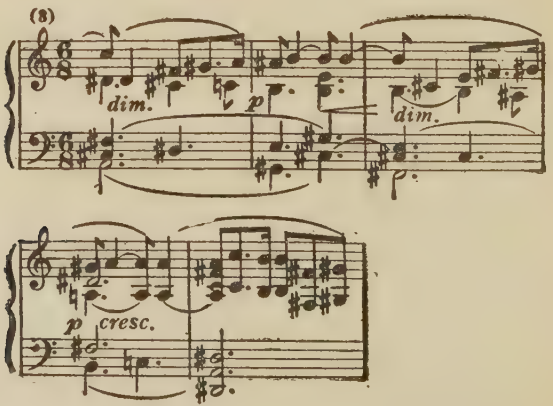
Wagner himself has given us a sort of clue to the signification of this motive, in a letter to Mathilde Wesendonck of 1860. He is in Paris, in the thick of the exhausting preparations for the production of *Tannhäuser*. He speaks of his unhappiness, his sense of homelessness, his wistful looking " towards the land of Nirvana." But Nirvana is identified in his mind with Tristan, and the character himself, he says, with the Buddhist theory of creation — how a veil of mist covers the heavens, then condenses into solidity and becomes the world; and he writes out the theme of No. 1B. It is to be hoped that all this was clearer to Frau Wesendonck than it is to us; but it seems evident that in Wagner's mind the theme was associated with love and longing.

In the opera it is associated with various words: at one point it accompanies a reference to " Frau Minne " (the Goddess of Love) as healing the world by her magic (see musical example No. 19); at another point it is linked with the more specific healing " magic " of Isolde and her mother. The only conclusion we can come to is that Wagner's themes were very often associated in his mind with generalised moods rather than with one definite conception that can be fixed in a single word.

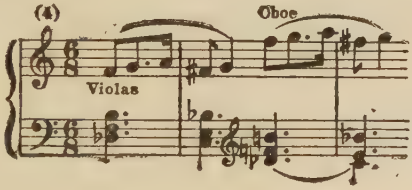
When we are listening to the opera we do not need to worry about the precise verbal significance of this, that, or the other theme; the difficulty exists only for the analyst who has to show forth the musical structure of the work, and for purposes of reference has to settle upon some one term or other as a convenient label for a motive. No. 1B may symbolise either Isolde's own magic or her mother's, or the broader magic of love, or the unhappiness that love brings, or the desire that is part of love, or many other things; indeed, it means each of these things at this point or other of the drama. But purely for convenience' sake we will agree to call it the motive of Magic, only warning the reader that he must not interpret " magic " in any crude sense.

After this digression, which has been made necessary by the peculiar " portmanteau " quality, so to speak, of many of Wagner's themes, let us resume our analysis of the Prelude.

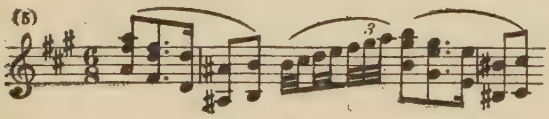
Two new motives soon make their appearance:

The first, which is given to the violins, is that of the hero Tristan; the second, given to the 'cellos, and commencing in the second half of the second bar of our quotation, is the Look motive. Whenever this occurs, it forces itself on the attention by reason of the strongly-marked physiognomy given it by the falling seventh.

The next theme to be noted is that of the Love Potion:

Here again the fall of a seventh is a conspicuous feature, due, perhaps, to the association of love with death in Wagner's mind.

Blended with this motive of the Love Potion is that of Death. This latter is of great importance, but most listeners and students of the piano score alone miss it. It is made up of the B, C, and low D sharp in the last two bars of our quotation, and is thrown out in a strongly-coloured line by the bassoons, basses and bass clarinet.

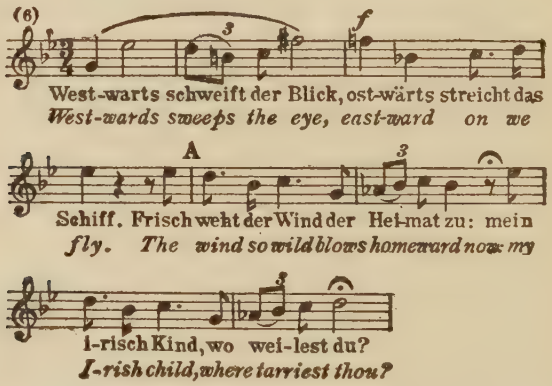
The difficulty of finding the correct literary labels for Wagner's themes is shown again by the various names given to the next motive of the Prelude:

that passes several times from one instrument or group of instruments to another. One commentator calls it the motive of the Magic Coffer (from which Brangaene later takes the fateful potion). Wagner, however, in a letter to Frau Wesendonck, identifies it with the ivy and vine branches that, according to legend, grew up in an embrace over the graves of Tristan and Isolde. The theme is obviously related to the Look motive.

Next comes the motive of Longing for (or Deliverance by) Death:



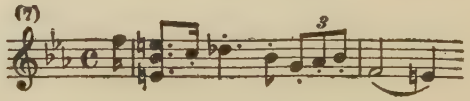
The music swells to a superb climax, in which the Magic motive, the Look motive, and the motive of Tristan's Sorrow are combined; then it subsides into the opening strain of the Prelude (No. 1), and short passage for 'cellos and basses in octaves brings the marvellous tone-poem to an end. It is the concentration into a few pages of the passion, the pain, the unsatisfied longing that rack Tristan and Isolde throughout the opera.

When the curtain rises we see a tent-like space on the fore-deck of a ship; at the back it is closed off by curtains. Isolde is reclining on a couch, her face buried in the cushions; Brangaene, holding a side curtain back, is looking over the side of the ship. From above, as if from the mast, comes the voice of a young sailor, singing a little song about an "Irish maid":


(6)
f
West-warts schweift der Blick, ost-wärts streicht das
West-wards sweeps the eye, east-ward on we
A
Schiff. Frisch weht der Wind der Hei-mat zu: mein
fly. The wind so wild blows homeward now my
i-risch Kind, wo wei-lest du?
I-rish child, where tarriest thou?

that Isolde takes to apply to herself. The phrase marked A is henceforth associated, all through the act, with the sea.

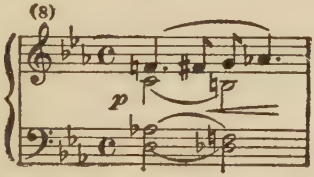
Wagner's method in *Tristan and Isolde* is more "symphonic" than in any other of his works; he develops, sometimes at great length, his chief themes in the orchestra very much as if they were the substance of a symphony — a fact that makes detailed analysis impossible within ordinary limits of space. It is over an orchestral development of this kind that the voices of Isolde and Brangaene play in the scene that ensues; our following quotation:



is typical of the modifications the theme undergoes.

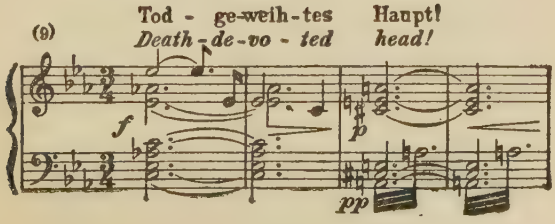
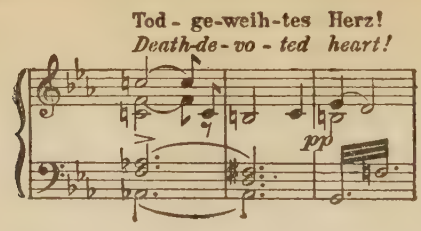
Isolde starts up, half in anger, half in bewilderment, like one rudely roused from a dream; she has been brooding upon what has happened in Ireland, and the fate that is now leading her to Corn-

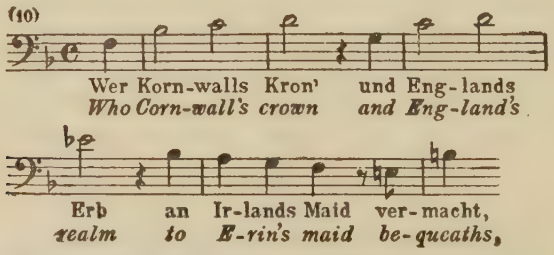
wall, there to be the bride of King Marke. " Where are we? " she asks Brangaene. " By evening," says the maid, " we shall make Cornwall." " Never! " cries Isolde; " neither today nor tomorrow." She bewails the degeneracy of her race: where now is the might that used to command sea and storm? The magic of the sorceress has been tamed: now it can brew only healing draughts. In the orchestra we hear the theme of Magic:



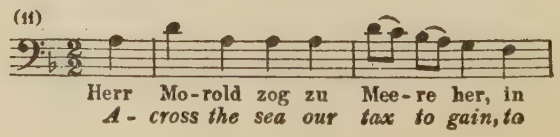
In rage and anguish she calls on the winds and waves to destroy the ship and all who are in it.

Brangaene laments over the desolation that has settled on Isolde since she set foot on the ship, and offers such consolation as she can. Isolde cries wildly, " Air! Air! " and Brangaene draws aside the curtains in the background, thus revealing the stern of the ship. Round the mast the sailors are busy with ropes; on the deck above them are a number of knights and squires, near whom stands Tristan, his arms folded, looking thoughtfully out to sea. At his feet lies his trusty old servant Kurvenal.

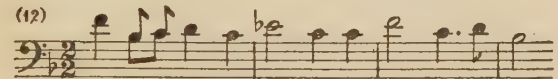
Again the song of the young sailor floats down from the unseen height of the mast. Isolde fixes her eyes on Tristan and says gloomily to herself, " Chosen for me, lost to me, strong and good, brave and coward, Death-devoted head, Death-devoted heart! " The latter words are sung to a phrase with some striking modulations in it:

She speaks scornfully to Brangaene of Tristan, who is "bringing a bride as corpse to his lord," and orders the maid to take a peremptory message to the hero to attend upon her. Isolde seats herself on the couch, keeping her eyes fixed on the stern of the ship throughout what follows. Kurvenal wakes Tristan from his trance by a pluck at his robe, and draws his attention to the coming of Brangaene.

The knight, with quiet courtesy, evades the challenge implied in Isolde's message: if he deserts the helm, he asks, how can he pilot the ship safely to Cornwall and King Marke? Brangaene becoming more insistent, Kurvenal, like the rough old war-dog he is, leaps to his feet and gives her a defiant and insulting answer in which Isolde is reminded of the thraldom of Ireland to Cornwall after the defeat and death of Morold, and of the sending of the latter's head to Ireland by way of grimly ironic "tribute." Kurvenal's speech commences thus:

(10)
Wer Korn-walls Kron' und Eng-lands
Who Corn-wall's crown and Eng-land's
Erb an Ir-lands Maid ver-macht,
realm to E-rin's maid be-queaths,

and breaks out at the end into a mocking refrain:



ending with a shout of contemptuous defiance:

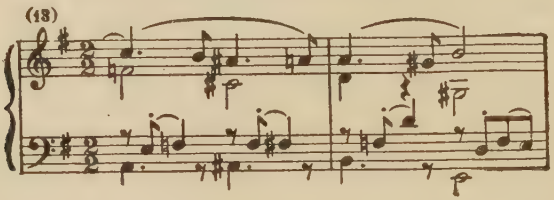


that is taken up by the sailors as the baffled Brangaene beats a retreat.

She closes the curtains again and throws herself with a cry of distress at Isolde's feet. Isolde's gestures show that she is on the verge of a terrific outburst; but checking herself by a great effort she bids Brangaene tell the whole story of the interview with Tristan. Not that there was any need for this, as she had heard all; but it is as if she feels a bitter pleasure in being assured by another of her own humiliation.

Then she tells Brangaene — and us — the whole course of events in the past; how a sick and almost dying man had come to Ireland to be healed of his wound by her magic arts; how, from the evidence of the notch in his sword blade, she learned that this " Tantris " was the Tristan who had slain Morold; how, in anger at this discovery, she had stood over him with the sword, meaning to wreak vengeance for Morold, when from his sick-bed the man had looked up, " not on the sword, not on my hand, but into my eyes, and his anguish wrung my heart, so that I let my sword fall " ; how she tended and cured the slayer of Morold, so that he might return home whole and sound again, no more to trouble her with his Look; how he had sworn a thousand oaths of eternal gratitude and honour.

" Hear now how a hero keeps his oath! " she cries in scorn; and the feverish tale goes on over its impassioned orchestral accompaniment — how Tristan had boldly come back in his own guise to win Ireland's heiress for the weary old King of Cornwall, his uncle Marke — an insult no one would have dared to offer had

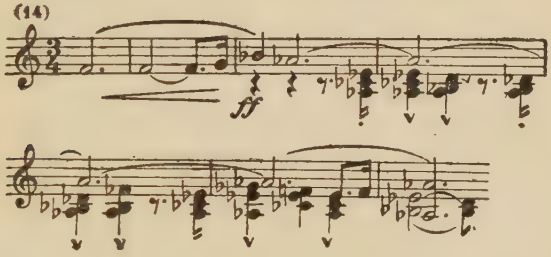
Morold been living, for Cornwall had been Ireland's tribute-paying vassal; how Tristan had told them in Cornwall what she had kept deeply secret, her sparing of his life; how he had praised her beauty to the King, and offered to take sail and bring her to him. " Curses on thee, traitor! " she cries in her frenzy. " Curses on thy head! Vengeance! Death! Death for us both! " Through her monologue runs the moving theme of Tristan's sickness:

Isolde rejects Brangaene's tender attempts to console her by turning her thoughts to the happy life that awaits her as the bride of the powerful Marke, and, staring fixedly before her, broods upon Tristan and herself.

Her real trouble reveals itself in her next words — " Unbeloved, ever to see the noblest of men near me! How could I endure that torment? " Brangaene, who does not penetrate her meaning, reminds her of the Love Potion that her mother has compounded in order to ensure her love in her marriage. Brangaene shows her the phial; but Isolde takes another from the casket, and says, " 'Tis *this* draught that I need." " The draught of Death," cries Brangaene, recoiling with horror. We learn that Isolde had put a mark of her own upon the phial to identify it; and it is thus made evident to us that even before leaving Ireland she had resolved on death.

Cries are heard from the sailors, and Kurvenal comes boisterously through the curtains to tell them to prepare for the landing and the presentation to King Marke. Isolde, with quiet dignity, orders him to take a message to Tristan; before she leaves the ship he must come to her and make atonement for a wrong he has done her that is as yet unforgiven.

When Kurvenal has gone, Isolde orders the shrinking and pro-

testing Brangaene to prepare " the cup of Peace," meaning the draught of Death; then she composes herself to meet Tristan, who comes forward, with great dignity, to the accompaniment of the tremendous motive of Tristan as Hero, with the motive of Morold trailing at its heels:

(14)

He fences with her for a time, pleading that his avoidance of her during the voyage has been out of respect and in accordance with custom. She reminds him of another custom — of making atonement with foes ere they can become friends. She reminds him of the blood-feud between them, which, he rejoins, was ended by truce in the open field after the defeat of Morold.

But it was not there, she goes on to say, that she had once held " Tantris " hidden when Tristan was in her power, and had pledged herself to silence. She would have him and us believe that when sparing Tantris she had secretly sworn to have vengeance for Morold; she would nurse the knight back to health only that some man appointed by her might in due time strike him down. But who is to do this now, seeing that Tristan is everywhere triumphant and honoured?

Tristan gloomily hands her his sword, bidding her deal the fatal blow herself. But she rejects this weapon, asking him what King Marke would think of her if she slew the very pearl of his knighthood. Their difference is not to be settled thus: there is one way only — they must drink atonement together; and she beckons to the agitated Brangaene to do what is required of her. The psychological motives of this scene are not always as clear as could be wished. Is Isolde really incensed against Tristan for killing

Morold, and anxious to avenge him, or is she merely feigning this resentment to get an excuse for persuading him to share the draught with her? A great deal of ink has been spilt over this problem.

The cries of the sailors taking in sail are heard without. " Where are we? " asks Tristan, starting from his gloomy brooding. " Near the goal! " replies Isolde, with an obviously double meaning; " wilt thou make atonement? " His answer is, " The Queen of Silence bids me be silent; if I grasp what she concealed, I conceal what she grasps not." She reminds him that they are very near the land: would it not be well if, when he is presenting her to King Marke, he can tell the monarch that the cup of atonement has been drunk between them?

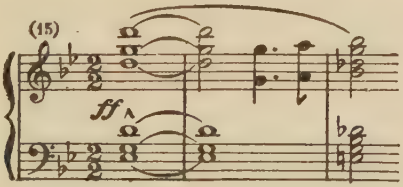
Giving a hasty order to the sailors, he takes the cup from her, speaks of his honour, his truth, his anguish, his heart's deception, his foreboding, and drinks " oblivion's good drink, sole balm for endless mourning." With a cry of " Traitor! I drink the half of it to thee! " Isolde snatches the cup from him and drains it. Then follows the scene that on the stage makes such demands on the actors' powers and on the sympathetic credulity of the audience.

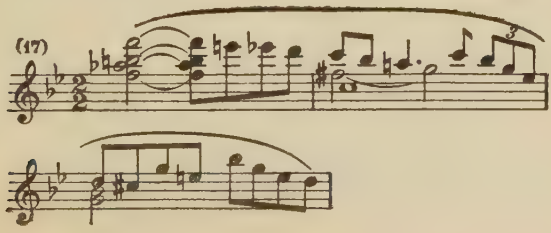
For a time only the orchestra speaks, giving out motives 1 and 2; Tristan and Isolde, expecting death, find love instead stealing over them, for Brangaene, either by accident or design, has substituted the Love Potion for the Draught of Death. But it is wrong to assume, as the casual spectator is apt to do, that it is to the physical effect of the potion that their love is due; the real point is that they have secretly loved each other all along, though Tristan's honour has prevented him from acknowledging it, and that the imminence of death, as they believe, has made it unnecessary for them to disguise their feelings any longer. But it must be admitted that Wagner has not succeeded in making his profound psychological intentions unmistakably clear to the ordinary theatre audience.

The lovers awake from their long dream of honour and shame to the realisation that each is all in all for the other, and they pour out their hearts in the most rapturous music that the world till then had ever known. The curtain being drawn aside, the shore is seen, with a castle crowning the heights. The lovers are still in a

trance; Brangaene breaks in between them and throws the royal robe over the unconscious Isolde. Kurvenal tries to rouse the dream-bound Tristan to a sense of reality, and Brangaene tells Isolde that the draught she has drunk was that of Love. The Eternal Night and Oblivion for which the pair have longed are denied them; they must still live on in the cruel light of Day. The curtain falls as preparations are being made for the landing, the orchestra ringing out with a vigorous, joyous version of the Sea motive (No. 6A) that seems a mockery of the lovers' pain.

It is with the longing for an escape into Eternal Night that the second act is concerned, not, as is too generally supposed, with the sensual ecstasies of two lovers, one of whom is another man's wife. It is doubtful even whether Isolde has been married to King Marke; nor are we given the slightest clue to the time that elapses between the first act and the second.

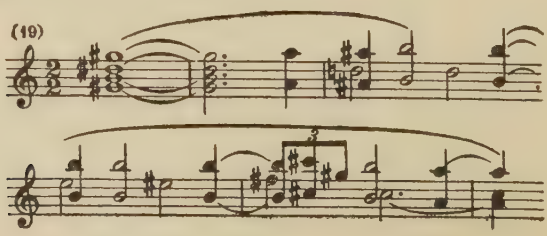
The passionate, almost feverish, orchestral introduction is based mainly on four motives, that of the garish Day (in the mystical rather than the material sense of the words) that the lovers hate:

that of Isolde's Impatience:

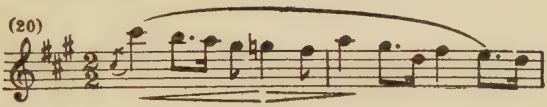
that of Isolde's Ardour:

and one to which it is impossible to give a name that will meet with universal agreement, but that may be called the motive of Ecstasy, that term, like so many others that we have to use here, being interpreted in a spiritual rather than a physical sense:

(18)

Hunting horns are heard as the curtain rises, showing us the garden in front of Isolde's chamber. It is a summer night, and the King is out hunting. At the side of the open door of the castle a torch is burning. Isolde, who is waiting for Tristan, comes out to Brangaene in great agitation; deceived, as her maid tells her, by desire, she no longer hears the sound of the horns; she hears only the murmuring of the fountain, telling her that one is waiting for her in the silence of the night.

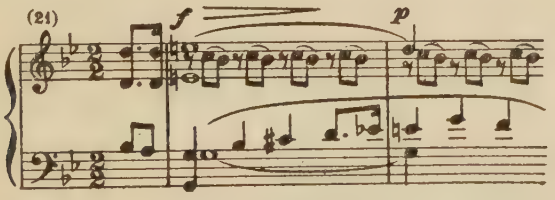
Brangaene warns her to beware of Tristan's enemy, Melot, who has watched them ever since they left the ship; this night hunt, she tells the incredulous Isolde, has been arranged by him to bring down a nobler prey than any beast of the field. Reiterating her belief in Melot, whom she regards as Tristan's trustiest friend, Isolde bids Brangaene give the signal by extinguishing the torch, as a symbol of the Night that is to enfold the lovers. Brangaene reproaches herself with having brought woe upon them all by her substitution of the Love Potion for the Draught of Death, but Isolde reassures her; the change in Tristan and herself was not Brangaene's work, but the all-powerful magic of Frau Minne, the Goddess of Love; and we hear in the orchestra an expansion of the Magic motive (No. 1B, No. 8):

(19)

"Life and Death are in thrall to her; she weaves them from joy and grief, changing hate to love. Daringly I took in hand the work of Death; Frau Minne wrested it from me. The Death-devoted she took in pledge; she did the work in her own way." Isolde's praise of Frau Minne is accompanied by a new motive, which we may call, for simplicity's sake, that of Love:

(20)

Her mystical ecstasy increasing, Isolde takes down the torch that symbolises the hateful Day, the orchestra, with a slower version of No. 18, rising to its first great climax in this act. She sends Brangaene up into the watch-tower, and as she extinguishes the torch the Death-devoted Head motive (No. 9) is given out *fortissimo* by the trumpets — an important psychological point that is liable to be missed by the student of the piano score alone.

An intensive working-up of No. 16 in the orchestra symbolises Isolde's impatience. She waves her veil as a signal to Tristan; in the following quotation this summons is shown combined with No. 16:

(21)



A famous Wagnerian singer, Rosa Sucher, began, with Wagner's approval, the practice of waving the veil up and down to the rhythm of the motive: the effect is, as a rule, so mechanical as to be woefully disillusioning.

At the climax of the orchestral excitement:

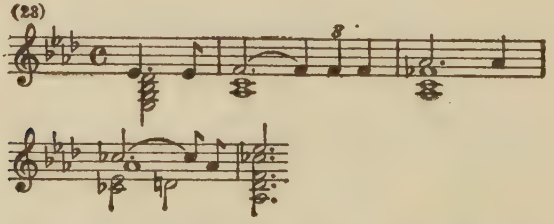
(22)

Tristan rushes in, and the pair fall into each other's arms with rapturous, almost incoherent ejaculations: their opening words — " Art thou mine? " " Do I hold thee again? " etc. — are taken by some commentators to imply that they have not seen each other since they set foot on land. The point, like so many in *Tristan and Isolde,* is obscure.

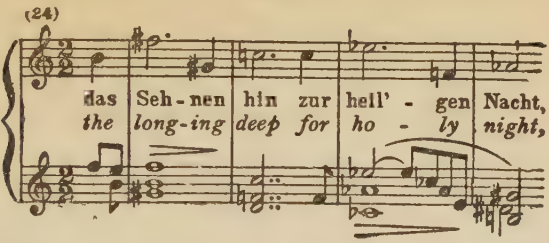
There now follows what is usually called the love duet — a convenient but somewhat misleading term. It is impossible to make its real meaning quite clear without quoting virtually the whole of the text, which must be read not only in full but in the original, for it is impossible to convey in any other language the many mystical, metaphysical double meanings of Wagner's words. The essential thing to remember is that the lovers escape from the cruel, blinding, detested Day into a Night in which their souls can become one; the Day is illusion and error, Night is a Truth and an Illumination beyond all the wisdom of earth.

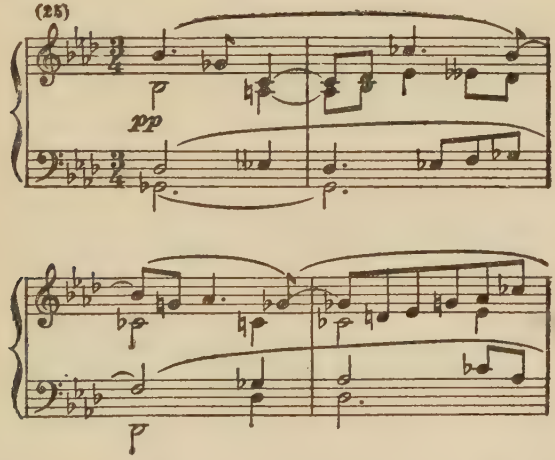
They go over the past, making clear their motives to each other. Tristan, living in the world of Day and Illusion, had been a traitor to Isolde; to save him and her from the consequences of treachery and error she had sought to unite herself to him in death, but the gates of death had opened only to let love in. The Night, beneficent, consoling Night, is typified in a new motive:

(23)

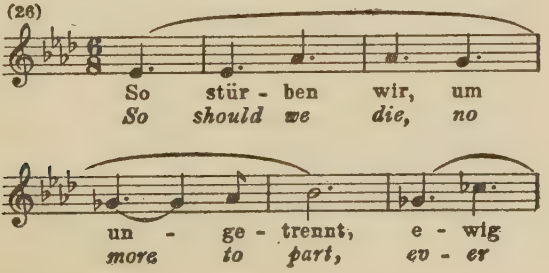


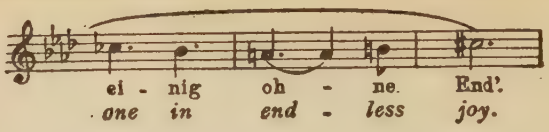
which is made the basis of some of the most exquisite music in the whole scene. (It is the substance also of the song *Träume.*) New motives spring up in the course of the duet. When Tristan speaks of the " longing for holy Night " that fills him who is tired of the falsehoods of the Day, the " Death-devoted Head " motive takes a new form:

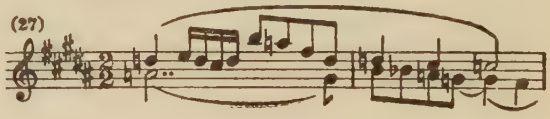
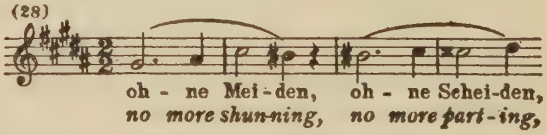
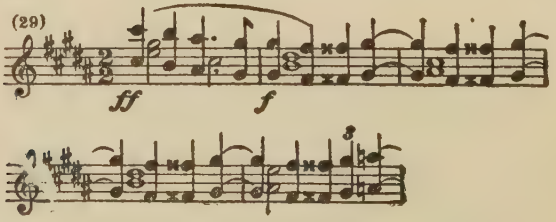
(24)

Later there comes a motive expressive of the lovers' yearning for release in Death:

(25)

(This seems to be a variant of No. 5.) Death may seize upon their bodies, but their Love would still endure in a mystic world beyond life:

(26)



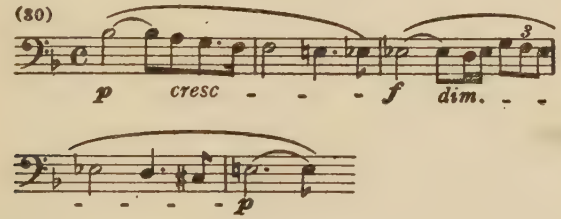


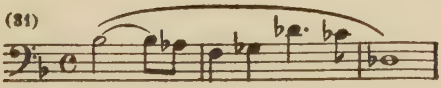
Twice the voice of Brangaene floats down from the tower, warning them that Day lies in wait for them, but the lovers pay no heed to her. The climax of their ecstasy is reached in a resumption of No. 26, to which is now added a theme that becomes of great importance in the closing scene of the opera:

When the pair speak of the Darkness in which there will be no more need for them to shun each other, the motives of Tristan as hero and Isolde's Magic are joined together and developed in the most natural manner:

Finally, No. 18 is expanded into the last and supremest cry of rapture:

as they lose themselves in the thoughts of the " highest joy of love."

Suddenly Brangaene gives a piercing shriek, and Kurvenal

rushes in with drawn sword, crying, " Save thyself, Tristan! " To the accompaniment of the hunting horns King Marke, Melot, and the courtiers enter and pause in horror as they see the lovers. Brangaene runs down from the tower and hastens towards Isolde. The latter, seized with involuntary shame, leans on a bank of flowers with averted face, and Tristan stretches out his mantle to hide her from the men.

A lingering echo of No. 26 and No. 27 is heard in the orchestra, followed by the theme of Day (No. 15) as Tristan says sadly, " The barren Day, for the last time! " Melot, in triumph, asks King Marke if his words were not true; but the good old King cannot agree that his honour and his name have been saved as Melot says. His one thought is sorrow at what he takes to be the failure of Tristan in honour. Two principal motives run through his long and mournful monologue. The first:



is expressive of Marke's sorrow. The second:

is more symbolical of him as he is in himself — noble and good, but as yet unable to understand the higher mystical world into which the love of Tristan and Isolde has raised them.

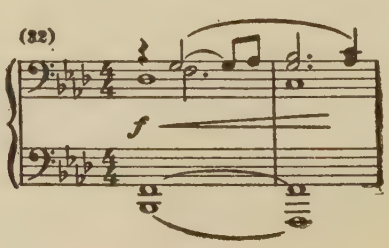
Both motives are entrusted in the first place to the bass clarinet, the dark tones of which give a distinctive colouring to the whole of the scene. Marke's long speech is regarded by some people as a bit of an anti-climax; but for those who understand the inner

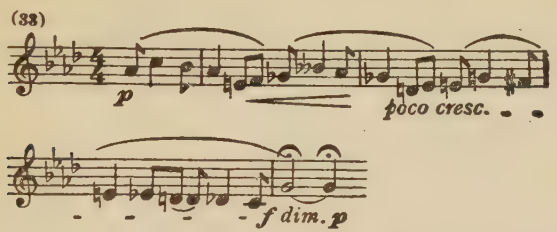
motives as distinct from the outer action of the drama, it is not a line too long.

Marke gently reproaches Tristan, whom he had thought the paragon of honour, for having brought this shame upon him. It is at this point we gather, from certain words of Marke's, that the marriage with Isolde has not yet taken place. He asks who can explain to him " the undiscovered, deep, mysterious cause " of all this woe.

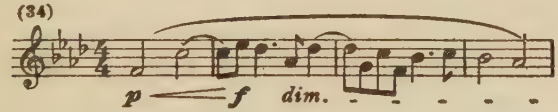
Tristan is sorry for him, but feels the impossibility of making the mystical matter clear to him by explanation. He turns to Isolde and asks if she will follow him to " the dark land of Night," from which he awoke when his mother brought him in sorrow into the world. She replies that as she once followed him " to a foreign land, so now will she go with him to his own real land, his heritage." As he bends over her slowly and kisses her gently on the forehead, the oboe gives out, in heart-rending tones, a new and most exquisite form of No. 18.

Melot draws his sword to attack Tristan, who exposes his false friend's treachery to the King: it was Melot who had urged him to bring Isolde to Cornwall, and being in love with her himself, it is jealousy that has now moved him to the betrayal of his friend. Tristan attacks Melot, but, for the second time seeking death, and relying on Isolde's promise to follow him, lets his guard fall and sinks wounded into Kurvenal's arms. Melot would follow him up, but King Marke holds him back as the curtain falls.

The third act takes place in the garden of the ramparts of Tristan's castle in Karéol, in Brittany, where Kurvenal has brought him for safety. There is a short but poignant orchestral prelude, in which we hear first of all a sombre, mournful version of the Day motive:

followed by a slowly-ascending passage in the violins, that gives an effect of great sea-space; then a sad theme in the horns and 'cellos:

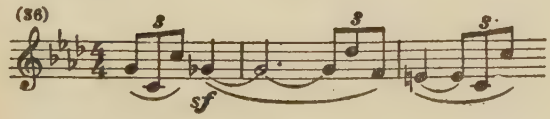


After various repetitions of these themes the curtain rises, showing the sick Tristan lying on a couch; in the distance we catch sight of the sea. An English horn behind the scenes gives out a melancholy melody:



that is supposed to be played by a shepherd whom Kurvenal has stationed on a watch-tower to look for the coming of Isolde's ship; the strange sadness of the tune is heightened by the frequent intrusion of a G flat into it, as in the following:

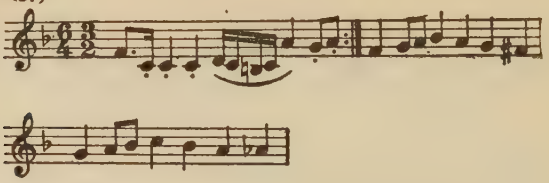
and again:



It is Kurvenal who has sent to Cornwall for Isolde to heal his master. Tristan, awakened by the shepherd's pipe, faintly asks Kurvenal where he is, and the faithful old servant tells him how he

brought him home to Karéol to be healed: accompanying his speech is the typical Karéol motive:

(87)



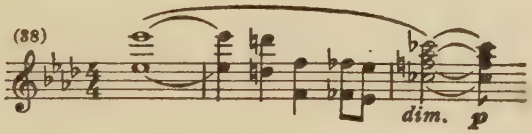
It is with difficulty that Tristan seizes the reality of the things about him; his soul is still sunk in the Night of Forgetfulness into which he had hoped to plunge for ever. One thought alone possesses him: Isolde still lives " in the kingdom of the Sun," and he must seek and find her, that he may lose his being for ever in hers. His tired and confused brain sees the light in the castle, and hears Isolde calling to him out of the night. Kurvenal tells him that he has sent for Isolde. The rough old warrior knows nothing of the nature of Tristan's suffering: he has only argued, in his simple way, that as Isolde's leechcraft healed his master of the wound dealt by the sword of Morold, it can surely heal also the wound dealt by Melot's.

Tristan raises himself at this news, and, seizing Kurvenal, pours into his ears an impassioned song in praise of friendship — such friendship as this there never was on earth, for those he hates, Kurvenal hates too, and those he loves, Kurvenal also loves; Kurvenal had been King Marke's true man, but when Tristan betrayed his King, Kurvenal too betrayed him. He is willing to suffer with his lord: " but what I suffer, that canst thou never suffer! This terrible yearning that consumes me; this ravaging fire that eats me away; could I but name it, couldst thou but know it, thou wouldst no longer tarry here, but hasten to the tower, there to scan the seas for her sail! " In imagination he sees the ship.

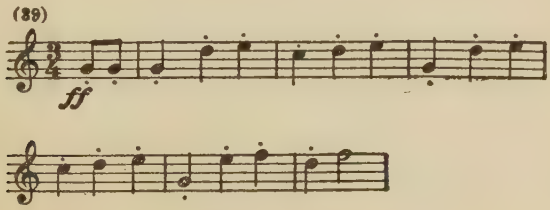
His frenzy at last breaks under its own terrific weight, and as he sinks back exhausted, and Kurvenal sadly tells him no ship is in

sight, the shepherd's melody threads itself in the most expressive way through Tristan's next despairing monologue. This was the strain he had heard when, as a child, he learned of his father's death; it was the same strain that rang in his mother's ears when she died in giving him birth. And now, what fate does it foretell for him? " To yearn! To die! Oh, ah no! Yearning, yearning! In dying still to yearn, to yearn but not to die! "

In mystical terms he recalls his association with Isolde, and grows frenzied again at the thought of the draught and the maddening, burning pain that has come from it; " the terrible draught that brought this anguish, 'tis I myself by whom it was made! From father's need and mother's woe, from lovers' tears in every age, from laughter and weeping, from rapture and sorrow, I distilled the poisons of the draught! " This mad thought is summed up musically in an agonised motive that keeps tearing its way through the tissue:



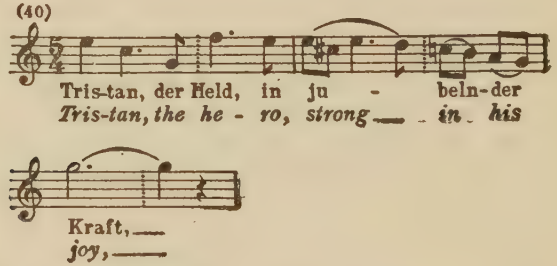
Once more he falls back exhausted, to the despair of Kurvenal, who thinks him dead; then, recovering consciousness, he describes his vision of Isolde crossing the sea to him; the lovely music culminates in a long cry of " Ah, Isolde! Isolde! How fair art thou! " that has not its equal in all music for expressiveness. While Kurvenal is trying to calm him once more, the shepherd blows a merrier tune:



Kurvenal rushes to the tower, and calls out "The ship! From northward she comes." He describes its pennon to Tristan, then the danger from the breakers, the skill of the steersman, the safe passing of the rocks, and at last Isolde's signal and her stepping to shore. Tristan sends him away to help her.

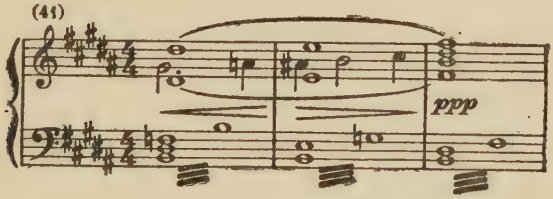
Left alone, his frenzy seizes upon him again; at its height he springs from his couch and staggers forward, Wagner cunningly suggesting the disorder of his brain by a use of the irregular metre of five-four:

(40)



He tears off his bandage and staggers to the middle of the stage. Outside Isolde's voice is heard in a cry of "Tristan! Beloved!" "What, do I hear the light?" cries the frenzied man. "The torch! Ah! The torch is quenched! To her! To her!" As Isolde enters he rushes, half fainting, to meet her; she receives him in her arms, and he sinks slowly to the ground, the orchestra giving out slowly the opening strains of the Prelude (No. 1). He ejaculates the one word "Isolde!" to the accompaniment of the Look motive (No. 2B), and dies in her arms.

At first she cannot believe that he is dead: "Not of the wound, ah, not of the wound must thou die: let the light of life go out with us twain united!" She at last sinks unconscious on his body just as the shepherd comes forward to tell Kurvenal that a second ship is in sight. The steersman rushes in, and the three hastily barricade the gate against what Kurvenal thinks to be the attack of King Marke, come to avenge himself on Tristan. Brangaene's voice is heard without, then that of Melot; as the latter forces his way in, Kurvenal strikes him dead.

King Marke appears in the gateway and tries to bring Kurvenal to reason, but the maddened old man-at-arms attacks the incomers; he is wounded, drags himself with his last strength to Tristan, and dies heroically and pathetically at his feet. Marke, in deepest grief, tells them all how, having learned of Tristan's freedom from dishonour, he had come over the sea to unite him to Isolde, and now all are dead! Brangaene tries to arouse Isolde, who is unconscious of everything but the body of the man who at last has preceded her into the realm of Night, where she must follow him. Over the body she sings the *Liebestod* — the two souls are now made one with each other and with the breath of the universe. At the very last there surges through the orchestral tissue, in the sad, piercing tones of the oboe:

the theme of Isolde's magic and Isolde's longing.

PARSIFAL

WAGNER was fond of laying stress on the distinction between Heart and Head, and stressing the superior virtue of the former. Certainly in his own practice, while his head might occasionally lead him astray, his heart — or, to give it another term, his instinct — was almost invariably right. We may call it his subconscious self or what we will, but the fact remains that an inner voice always counselled him wisely in his art; something within him invariably warned him when he was not intellectually or musically ripe for some subject or other that had attracted his attention.

Between the conclusion of *Lohengrin* in January 1848 and his commencement upon the *Rhinegold* in October 1853, a period of nearly six years, he wrote no music at all. The explanation of this curious phenomenon is that, while his head was full of dramatic schemes of an absolutely new kind, he knew instinctively that as a musician he was not yet ripe for them.

Upon this point we shall touch later when we come to deal with the *Ring*. Meanwhile we have to note a similar phenomenon in the case of *Parsifal*. Something corresponding in essence to the Parsifal subject had hovered vaguely at the back of his consciousness for some twenty years before he embarked upon the opera as we now know it, but he had to wait, as usual, till what was dimly trying to realise itself in the lower strata of his subconsciousness forced its way, by virtue of its own inner growth, into his upper consciousness.

After his flight from Dresden in 1849 he passed some years in a painful intellectual and emotional ferment. He was thoroughly

unhappy in himself, because with his own life everything seemed to have gone wrong; he was equally unhappy about the state of the world in general, for he had seen the high hopes of the revolutionaries and reformers of 1848 scattered into dust. He thought that both in the theatre and in political and social matters a new world was struggling towards the light; but how to bring it to birth he did not know.

This is, in part, the explanation of his devoting so much of his time during these years to the writing of prose works, in which he tried not only to set the world to rights, but to clarify his own ideas. In the meantime he was struggling desperately to come to a clear understanding with himself as a dramatist. The truth is that his faculties at this time were in unstable equilibrium. He was growing mentally at a tremendous rate, but the different parts of his mind were not all growing at the same speed.

Although he himself hardly knew it, the *Ring, Tristan,* and *Parsifal* were all vaguely stirring within him. But before he could work out these vast schemes in the right way he had to bring about a stable equilibrium among his various energies; and the years immediately following 1848 were unconsciously devoted to this task.

First of all he projected a drama on the subject of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and then drafted a sketch for a play on the theme of Jesus of Nazareth. He soon realised that both schemes were unfit for musical treatment in his peculiar way; indeed, from the fact that *Jesus of Nazareth* was planned for five acts, and from other indications, it is practically certain that he never intended to write music — except, perhaps, a little incidental music — to this subject. His mind was obsessed at this time with thoughts of Love, Renunciation, and Salvation, and the *Jesus of Nazareth* was only one of the various attempts he was making to find the proper musical and dramatic form for these ideas.

" I was burning," he tells us, " to write something that should take the message of my tortured brain, and speak in a fashion to be understood by present life. Just as with my Siegfried, the force of my desire had borne me to the fount of the Eternal Human: so

now, when I found this desire cut off by modern life from all appeasement, and saw afresh that the sole redemption lay in flight from out this life, casting off its claims on me by self-destruction, did I come to the fount of every modern rendering of such a situation — Jesus of Nazareth, the Man."

There is already something of *Parsifal* in this, just as there is already something of the later Tristan in a passage he wrote in 1851: "What, in fine, could this love yearning, the noblest thing my heart could feel — what other could it be than a longing for relief from the present, for absorption into an element of endless love, a love denied to earth and reachable through the gates of death alone?" This, as the reader of our *Tristan* analysis will know, is virtually the theme of that opera.

In 1856, while he was working at the *Ring,* and a year or more before he had commenced *Tristan,* he wrote a sketch for a drama called *Die Sieger* (The Victors), which was not published until after his death. This was a Buddhistic play, the central motive of which is that Prakriti can only be united to Amanda if she shares the latter's vow of chastity. In this there is already a touch of *Parsifal.* And that Wagner's subconscious mind was running upon the Parsifal subject is shown by the intention he had at one time of introducing Parsifal into the third act of *Tristan.* In the process of the years his intuitions gradually sorted themselves out and the vital parts of them coalesced.

In Parsifal himself, as the reader will recognise, there is something both of Jesus and of the Buddha. But although Wagner had the Parsifal theme more or less in his mind since 1845, when he became acquainted with the Parsifal poem of Wolfram von Eschenbach, the Minnesinger, it was not until 1865, when more than half of the *Ring,* the whole of *Tristan,* and part of the *Mastersingers* had been written, that he at last saw his way clear through the jungle of the Parsifal subject.

In August of that year he made his first sketch of the libretto, but it was not until considerably later that the text assumed its final form, in 1877. In December of that year he published the poem. He had begun work upon the music a little while before that, and the actual composition was completed in the spring of 1879,

though the orchestration was not finished till January 1882. The first performance took place at Bayreuth on the 26th July, 1882, under Levi. The Prelude had been written in December 1878, and on Christmas Day of that year, in celebration of his wife's birthday, it was played for the first time in Wagner's house, Wahnfried, by the Meiningen Orchestra, Wagner himself conducting.

During the Bayreuth Festival of 1882 *Parsifal* was given sixteen times. At the last of these performances, on the 19th August, Levi being taken ill during the first act, Wagner himself, unknown to anyone in the theatre, took charge of the performance from the Transformation Scene to the end of the first act.

The story of *Parsifal* is one of those associated with the old legend of the Holy Grail. The Castle of the Grail is Monsalvat, standing on a mountain in Spain, where are gathered together a company of holy Knights who guard two precious objects — the Spear with which Christ's side was pierced on the Cross, and the Cup from which He drank at the Last Supper, and that received His blood while on the Cross. Only the perfectly pure in heart can be of this chosen company, whose mission it is to do good in the world of men through the miraculous powers conferred upon them by the Grail.

The crisis from which the opera takes its starting-point has occurred some time before our story opens. A Knight named Klingsor, whose ambition to be one of the Knights of the Grail had been frustrated by the incurable sinfulness of his heart, in his rage against the Brotherhood adopted the ways of magic; he created a beautiful garden and peopled it with lovely women, through whom he snared the souls of some of the weaker of the Knights. Amfortas, the son of the old Titurel who had built Monsalvat, one day took the sacred Spear with him to exorcise the magic of the garden, but he too succumbed — to the wiles of Kundry, who was in the service of Klingsor. The latter had thus been able to take possession of the Spear, with which he had dealt Amfortas a wound in the side for which no remedy has yet availed.

For a performance of the Prelude for the King of Bavaria at Munich in 1880 Wagner drafted an explanatory note, which, in Mr. Ellis's translation, runs thus:

" Love — Faith: — Hope? "

First theme: " Love."

" Take ye My body, take My blood, in token of our love! "
(Repeated in faint whispers by angel-voices.)
" Take ye My blood, My body take, in memory of Me! "

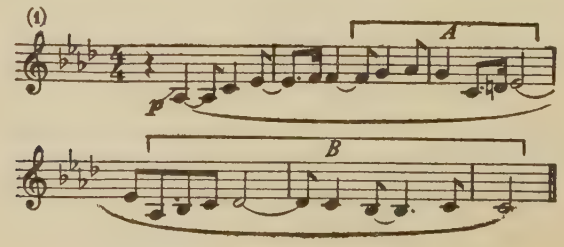
(Again repeated in whispers.)

Second theme: " Faith."

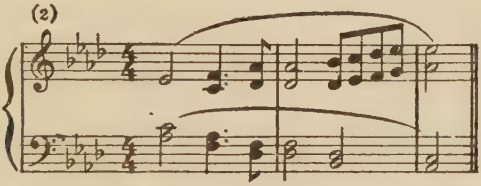
" Promise of redemption through faith. Firmly and stoutly faith declares itself, exalted, willing even in suffering. To the promise renewed Faith answers from the dimmest heights — as on the pinions of the snow-white dove — hovering downwards — usurping more and more the hearts of men, filling the world, the whole world of Nature, with the mightiest force, then glancing up again to heaven's vault as if appeased.

" But once more, from out the awe of solitude, throbs forth the cry of loving pity; the agony, the holy sweat of Olivet, the divine death-throes of Golgotha — the body pales, the blood flows forth, and glows now in the chalice with the heavenly glow of blessing, shedding on all that lives and languishes the grace of ransom won by Love. For him who — fearful rue for sin at heart — must quail before the godlike vision of the Grail, for Amfortas, sinful keeper of the halidom, we are made ready: will redemption heal the gnawing torments of his soul? Once more we hear the promise, and — we hope! "

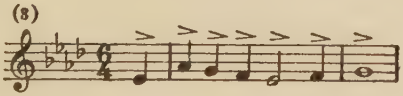
The Prelude opens with the Love Feast motive in the strings and wood-wind:



The quotation here given, which constitutes the first six bars of the Prelude, really contains three distinct themes — that of the Love Feast proper, that of Suffering (which we have marked A), and that of the Spear (marked B). Further repetitions of No. 1, interspersed with broad chords and arpeggios, are followed by the theme of the Holy Grail, which the reader will recognise as the Dresden Amen:

(2)

Then comes the theme of Faith, given out in ringing tones by the trumpets:

(3)



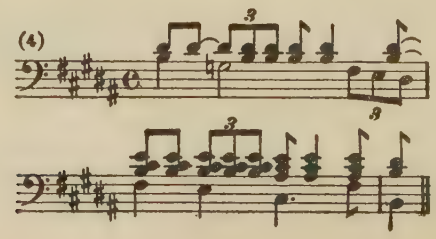
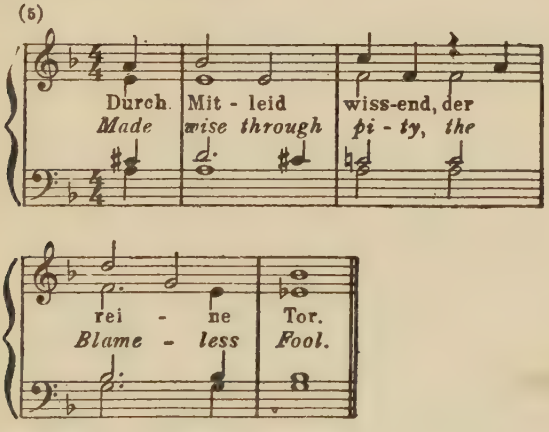
This and the Grail theme are repeated, and No. 3 is developed at some length and in various colours.

Just when we are beginning to fear that the repetitions are becoming excessive Wagner introduces a skilful touch; he changes the time from 6/4 to 9/4, and by the prolongation of certain chords creates a totally different system of rhythm and accent. The contrast thus afforded makes it safer for him then to introduce the theme once more in the original 6/4 metre. The remainder of the Prelude is devoted to metamorphoses of No. 1, the most agonising expression being drawn from the motive of Suffering and from that of the Spear. In its own way the Prelude to *Parsifal* is the most expressive piece of music that had ever been written until that time.

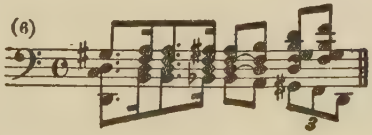
It is sometimes said in the analytical programme books that Wagner described the Prelude as symbolising "Love — Faith — Hope." If the reader, however, will glance again at the note that

Wagner himself wrote for King Ludwig, he will see that the Hope is followed by a note of interrogation. Wagner does not mean to imply that the Prelude fulfils the hope, but only that it suggests the possibility of it — a possibility to be resolved in the coming drama. And on referring to the score of the Prelude as it occurs in the opera, not in the arrangements for concert purposes, the reader will see that it too ends, as it were, with a question mark; in the eighth bar before the end, just as we are expecting that the music will settle down upon the tonic A flat chord, the melody soars upwards and upwards over a harmony that is left in doubt until the very end, the Prelude coming to a finish with the chord of the dominant seventh still unresolved.

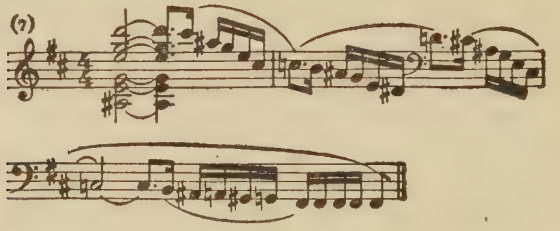
When the curtain rises we see a forest — solemn and shady but not gloomy — in the domain of the Grail. On the left is a road ascending to the Castle. At the back the ground sinks down to a lake. Asleep under a tree are Gurnemanz — an elderly but vigorous man — and two young Esquires. From the left, as though from the Castle, comes a solemn morning reveille in the trombones; the theme is that of the Love Feast (No. 1). Gurnemanz wakes and rouses the Esquires; as they spring to their feet we hear the Dresden Amen in the rich tones of the trumpets and trombones behind the scenes. Gurnemanz and the Esquires kneel and silently offer up the morning prayer, the orchestra giving out very softly the motive of Faith (No. 3), which is succeeded once more by the theme of the Grail (No. 2).

The King (Amfortas) is expected, and Gurnemanz bids the Esquires prepare the bath; at the mention of the King we hear the typical Amfortas motive:

Two Knights enter to announce the coming of the litter with the King. Gurnemanz accosts them; he hopes that the herb that the Knight Gawain has obtained with difficulty has brought the King some solace. The Knights tell him that the hoped-for remedy has had no effect, and that Amfortas is in more grievous pain than ever; " sleepless from pain past bearing, he bade us quick prepare the bath." Gurnemanz sinks his head sadly, and over the motive of the Pure Fool in the orchestra:

declares that they are fools thus to look for material remedies when only one thing and one man can heal Amfortas. The others ask who is this mysterious one, but Gurnemanz turns aside and evasively orders them to see to the bath.

The two Esquires have gone to the background; looking to the right they announce that the " wild rider " is coming. Rushing figures and a rhythm as of galloping:



are heard in the orchestra as the Esquires excitedly describe the fury of the ride of Kundry on the " Devil's mare," and as they

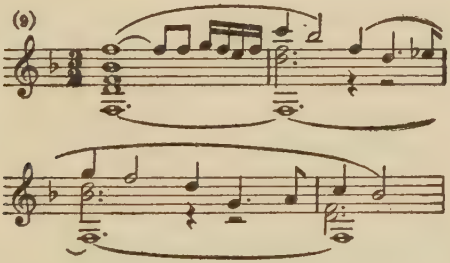
speak of the wild woman flinging herself off her steed the orchestra gives out a wild, uncanny motive associated with Kundry and her mad laughter:

She rushes in almost reeling. Around her looped-up robe is a girdle of snake-skin with long ends. Her black hair hangs down in loose locks; her complexion is a deep reddish-brown; her black and piercing eyes sometimes flash wildly, but more often remain fixed and staring like the eyes of the dead.

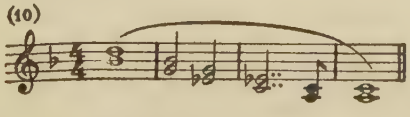
This Kundry is a character so enigmatical that it is difficult to explain her in words. There is something in her of Herodias, something of Gundryggia, the messenger who serves the heroes in some of the northern sagas, something also of the Prakriti of *The Victors*. More or less unconsciously she is half good, half evil. She is devoted to the service of the Grail, yet Klingsor can use her for his own evil ends. Both the conception and the musical treatment of such a character would have been impossible to any genius less stupendous than that of Wagner.

Kundry staggers up to Gurnemanz and forces a small crystal vial into his hand, ejaculating, " Here! Take it! Balsam. . . ." She has brought it " from farther hence than thy thought can fly " ; and should this fail, Arabia holds nothing more for the healing of Amfortas. " Ask no further; I am weary," she moans, and throws herself on the ground. Gurnemanz turns from her to greet a train of Esquires and Knights that now enters with the litter on which Amfortas lies. While the train is coming upon the stage Gurnemanz breaks out into a cry of grief over " the proudest flower of manhood faded, the master of the conquering race

to his own sickness bound a slave! " And we hear in the orchestra the broad motive of the Knights of the Grail:

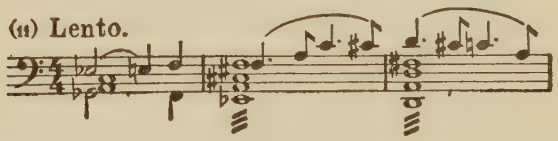
which will be recognised as a variant of the theme of Faith (No. 3).

The litter having been set down, Amfortas raises himself slightly, and, over the grievous Amfortas motive, speaks of the beauty and solace of the morning light after his night of pain; while in the orchestra we hear the exquisite theme associated with the Wood:

He calls for Gawain, and is told that the Knight, finding that the herb he brought had only deceived their hopes, has set out again upon his quest. Amfortas fears that he may fall into the snares of Klingsor, and then expresses his own faith in the Deliverer that has been promised — the one who has been " made wise by pity, the Blameless Fool." Gurnemanz hands him Kundry's vial and begs him to try the balsam. Whence came it? asks Amfortas, and before Gurnemanz can answer, the orchestra gives the answer with the motive that typifies Kundry's passion for service:



At Gurnemanz's suggestion Amfortas takes the vial that Kundry has brought; he thanks her, but, still prostrated on the ground,

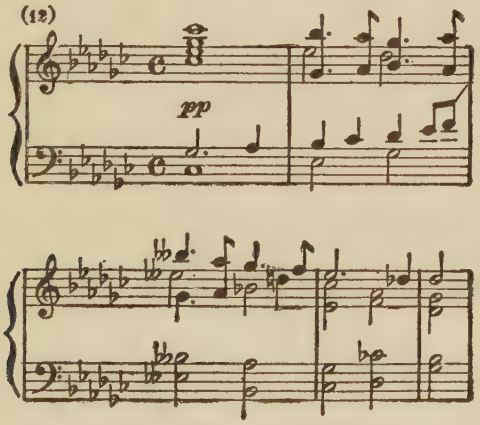
she almost sullenly rejects his thanks and bids him go to the bath. The litter moves away, and the stage clears, except for Gurnemanz, Kundry, and four Esquires. The young men look with an unfavourable eye on Kundry; to them she is merely a sort of wild beast with a touch of the witch about it; they fear that she will work some evil upon the King.

Gurnemanz defends her; he tells them of all her services to the Brotherhood — how she acts as messenger between Monsalvat and the Knights who are fighting in distant lands, how she is always ready to serve, and never asks for even a word of thanks. The Esquires are not convinced; to them she is simply a heathen and a sorceress. Gurnemanz explains that perhaps she lies under a curse; she may be expiating the sins committed in a former life. At any rate, she is now doing her best to make atonement by service among the Knights. He has to admit, however, that often misfortune has come upon the Brotherhood while she has been away, and the motive of Klingsor's Magic in the orchestra:

tells us that on these absences she is helping him to carry out his evil plans. Titurel, when he built the Castle, had found her lying benumbed under a thicket; and it was thus that Gurnemanz himself lately found her about the time that the misfortune of the loss of the Spear and the wounding of Amfortas had come upon them. Turning to Kundry, he asks her where she was then, and why she withheld her help; but she only mutters, " I never help! "

The Esquires suggest that if Kundry is so devoted to the Brotherhood, she might be sent to find the missing Spear; but Gurnemanz replies that that is beyond her; no one knows the way. While the orchestra plays again and again upon the poignant motives of Suffering and the Spear (No. 1A and No. 1B), Gurnemanz pours out a lament over the loss of the Spear, which was torn from Am-

fortas's hand while he was lost in the embrace of a beautiful woman. At the King's cry Gurnemanz had rushed forward, only to see Klingsor flying with the Spear, mocking the King with his laughter. In the King's side was a burning wound that since that day has never closed.

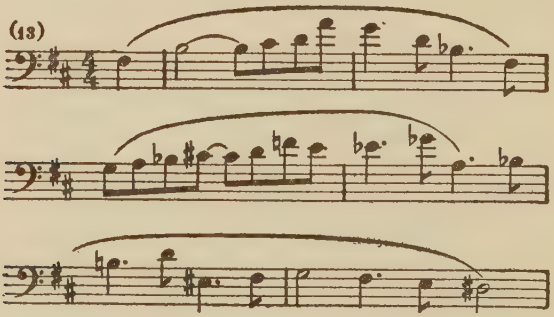
All are now seated under a great tree, the Esquires being grouped round Gurnemanz, who, at their request, tells what he knows of Klingsor. First comes the story of how the messengers from heaven long ago descended, bearing with them the Grail and the Spear, which they gave into the keeping of Titurel. An important new theme:



is heard at this point in the orchestra. It is a little difficult to find a title for it, and various commentators refer to it under different names. Here we will think of it as the Miracle motive, meaning by that the miraculous bringing of the Grail and the Spear to Monsalvat. In the final pages of the score the theme is more particularly associated with the recovery of the Spear through Parsifal.

Titurel, Gurnemanz continues, had built a sanctuary for the precious relics, and founded the Order of Knights to which only the pure of heart could be admitted. To one who would have joined it, however, admission had been denied — Klingsor. This Knight, unable to tame his lusts, had in desperation mutilated his

body, thinking thereby to qualify for admission to the Order. It was not so, however, and Titurel drove him scornfully from Monsalvat.

Then Klingsor's heart was filled with rage; he learned that the deed he had wrought upon himself had endowed him with command over the powers of magic, and these powers he now used to compass the destruction of the Order. He turned the desert into a beautiful garden, in which he placed the fairest women to lure the Knights from virtue. Many Knights had thus been lost; and when Titurel, finding age advancing upon him, surrendered his office to his son Amfortas, the latter burned with zeal to crush this plague. The sad outcome of his effort they know — Amfortas himself fell, the Spear was ravished from him, and as the Spear gives Klingsor power over the Brotherhood, he hopes by means of it to seize the Grail also. Two important new motives make their appearance during this narrative — that of Klingsor:

and that of the Flower Maidens (No. 19 below). When Gurnemanz speaks of the fall of Amfortas, the orchestra, by the use of the Kundry motive (No. 7), hints to us who was the woman who accomplished his downfall.

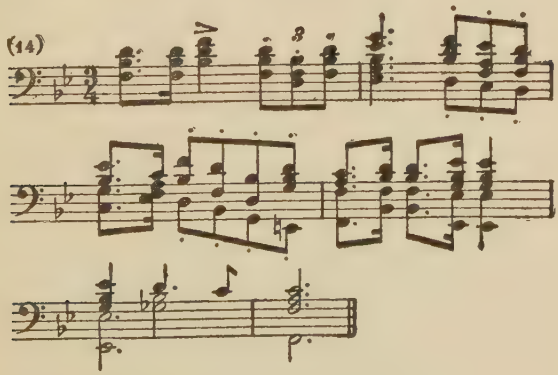
During the telling of this story Kundry has frequently turned round in passionate disquiet. She is dimly aware, and is tortured by the knowledge, of her own dual nature, and of her servitude to Klingsor when he has put his enchantment on her.

Gurnemanz continues with his story. The repentant Amfortas had bent in agony before the sanctuary and asked for a sign of

redemption; a holy radiance had poured from the Grail, and one who appeared in a vision had spoken these words:

"Made wise through pity,
The Blameless Fool,
Wait for him;
My chosen is he."

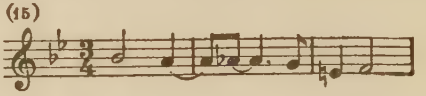
Gurnemanz sings this message to the motive of the Pure Fool (No. 5), and the strain is taken up and given out with exquisite effect in four-part harmony by the Esquires.

Cries are heard from the direction of the lake, and Gurnemanz and the four Esquires start to their feet and look round in alarm. A wounded wild swan, followed by Knights and others, flies brokenly across from the lake and sinks heavily to the ground. One of the Knights draws an arrow from its breast. Amfortas, it seems, had caught sight of it crossing the lake, and had hailed it as a good omen; then there came an arrow, and the swan had sunk mortally wounded. Among the crowd is a young man very simply clothed, and carrying a bow and arrows. He is dragged forward, and all point to him as the slayer of the swan. The young man, to the typical motive of Parsifal as Hero:

does not deny the charge.

Gurnemanz reads him a moving lecture on the sin of slaying the gentle, trusting creatures of the forest, and as he points to the bleed-

ing and stiffening body and the glazing eye of the swan, the young man is so affected that he breaks his bow and throws the arrows away. He does not *know* how or why what he has done is wrong, but he *feels* that it is wrong; pity has come upon him, and we hear in the orchestra for the first time the Pity motive:

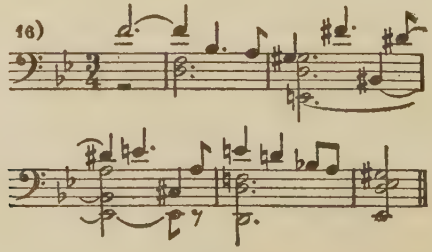
(15)



that will be put to such touching uses later. It will be seen to be derived from the final part of the Love Feast motive (No. 1).

(Wagner was at all times a great lover of animals, and in his later years he was a passionate protester against vivisection. Gurnemanz's moving oration over the dead swan is in part an expression of Wagner's lifelong feeling about animals, in part a reminiscence of an incident in the life of the Buddha, where the wounding of a swan stirs the Buddha to teach compassion to the world.)

Not only does not the young stranger know that he has done wrong, but it appears, from his answers to Gurnemanz's questions, that he does not know whence he has come, who is his father, or what his own name is. Turning wearily and contemptuously from this dullard, Gurnemanz orders the Esquires to take the dead swan away. Only Gurnemanz and Parsifal remain, with Kundry still prostrate at one side of the stage. The old man once more tries to find out if Parsifal knows anything. He replies that he knows that he has a mother, whose name is Heart of Sorrow (Herzeleide), and the orchestra gives out the moving Herzeleide theme:

16)

He can tell Gurnemanz nothing more than that he and his mother once had their home in the wild woods, and that he himself made his bow and arrows.

Kundry, however, who has been stirring restlessly all this time, breaks in hoarsely upon the conversation. She knows more about Parsifal than he does himself. His father was Gamuret, who had been slain in battle before his son was born. His mother had brought the boy up in the desert, a stranger to arms, dreading a violent death for him also. But her care was in vain; Parsifal made primitive arms for himself, and one day, catching sight in the woods of what he describes as " glittering riders on beautiful animals " (presumably the Knights of the Grail) he had followed them, and, having lost them, had searched for them day and night through the wilderness, his bow and arrows defending him when wild beasts or giants or robbers had threatened him. This narration is accompanied by the Gallop motive (No. 6) and the Parsifal motive (No. 14).

Kundry breaks in upon the simple boy's enthusiasm with the announcement that his mother is dead: " As I rode by I saw her dying; and, Fool, she sent thee, by me, her greeting." Half in sorrow, half in rage, Parsifal springs at Kundry and seizes her by the throat. Gurnemanz restrains him, and reproaches him for what, following the needless killing of the swan, seems to be the brutal violence of his nature. Parsifal is seized with a violent trembling, and falls fainting into the arms of Gurnemanz.

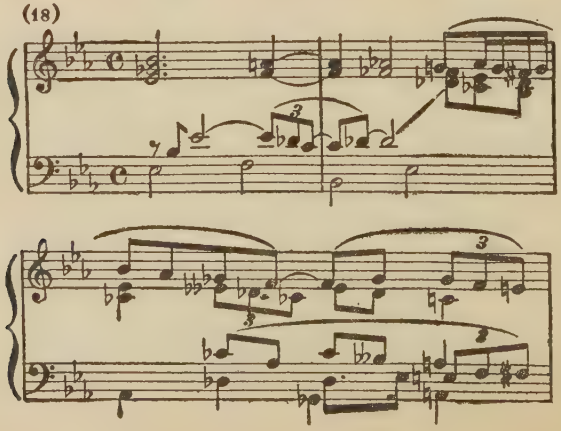
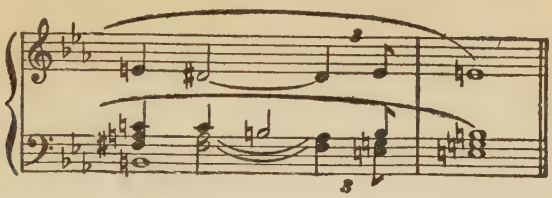
Kundry hastens away to a spring in the wood, whence she returns with water in a horn; she sprinkles Parsifal and hands him the water to drink. Gurnemanz thanks Kundry, but she only mutters, " Good do I never: only rest I long for: I am weary. To sleep! Oh that no one e'er might wake me! No! Not to sleep! Horrors seize upon me! " While Gurnemanz is attending to Parsifal she drags herself to a thicket in the wood, and the orchestra, by giving out the themes of Klingsor's Magic Power (No. 11) and of Klingsor himself (No. 13), tells us of the malign influence that is now overcoming her. She staggers behind the thicket, and for the remainder of the scene remains unnoticed.

Gurnemanz has gently placed Parsifal's arm round his own neck and his own arm round Parsifal's body, and he leads the boy along with slow steps as the orchestra gives out the motive of the Bells of Monsalvat:

(17)

The old man has been struck by the artlessness of the boy, and there seems to be an idea at the back of his mind that this stranger, in virtue of his innocence, may prove to be the Deliverer promised in the vision.

The pair are now supposed to walk through the wood to the Hall of the Grail. This illusion Wagner intended to be conveyed by means of moving scenery, though not all theatres have the apparatus for this; the wood gradually disappears and rock is seen; in the rock a gate opens through which the pair pass and become lost to sight for a time, later becoming visible again ascending a path. All the while the orchestra pours out the magnificent Transformation Music, that for a while has a march-like quality given to it by No. 17, but that later swells to a poignant climax as the heartrending theme of the Penitence of Amfortas is given out three times in succession, the last time with the utmost richness of colour of which the orchestra is capable:

(18)

As Gurnemanz and Parsifal come nearer to the Hall, the sound of bells ceases, while six trombones behind the scenes give out *fortissimo* the theme of the Love Feast (No. 1). At last the pair come to a vast hall, surmounted by a great vaulted cupola, through which alone the light enters.

Gurnemanz now means to put Parsifal to the test. " Give good heed," he says, " and let me see, if thou art a Fool and pure, what knowledge may be given to thee." Gurnemanz leaves Parsifal at the side of the stage, and then, to music of the utmost splendour, the Knights of the Grail enter for the solemn Feast. Two long covered tables are so arranged that, running in parallel lines from back to front, the centre of the stage is left open. On the tables there are only cups. The Knights, entering from the background through a great door, come forward in two files in solemn procession, followed by the Esquires. At last the Knights place themselves at the tables. Amfortas is borne in on a couch, preceded by four Esquires carrying a shrine wrapped in a purple-red cover, and is placed on a raised couch under a canopy in the centre background, while a chorus of youths' voices floats down from the mid-height of the dome with the heartrending theme of Amfortas's Penitence (No. 18).

In front of Amfortas's couch is an antique oblong marble table, like an altar, upon which the Esquires place the covered shrine. From the extreme height of the dome steals an exquisite four-part harmony of soprano and boys' voices singing the theme of Faith (No. 3), and after a momentary pause (all the Knights having taken their seats at the tables) from the extreme background comes the voice of old Titurel, as if from a tomb. Titurel asks if he must die before the coming of the Deliverer. Amfortas, half raising himself on his couch, breaks into passionate self-accusation; he implores his father to serve the office, and to live and let him die.

"In the grave I lie," Titurel replies, "by the Saviour's grace; too feeble am I to serve Him. Serve thou, and so thy guilt atone. Uncover the Grail!"

Amfortas tries to prevent the Esquires from removing the cover, and once more he breaks out into a grievous lament, the music of which is of heartbreaking poignancy. "Have mercy!" he cries at last. "Have mercy! Thou God of pity, oh have mercy! Take back my birthright, so Thou but heal me, that holy I may die now, pure for Thy presence!" He sinks back as though unconscious, and from the middle height comes floating softly down, in four-part harmony in the boys' and youths' voices, the enigmatic theme of the Pure Fool.

Once more the voice of Titurel is heard bidding them unveil the Grail. Amfortas raises himself slowly and with difficulty on his couch, and the Esquires, having unveiled the shrine, take from it the Grail (an antique crystal cup); this also they uncover and place before Amfortas. He bows devoutly before the cup in silent prayer.

The Hall grows darker and darker, and from the mysterious heights come the voices of the invisible choir exhorting the Knights, to the motive of the Love Feast (No. 1), to take the Body and drink the Blood in love's remembrance. Suddenly a dazzling ray of light from above strikes upon the chalice, which glows with a deepening purple, shedding a soft radiance on them all. Amfortas, his expression transfigured, raises the Grail on high and waves it gently to every side, consecrating the bread and wine. He sets the Grail down again, and as the semi-darkness that has filled the Hall disperses, the glow of the chalice slowly fades away. The Esquires enclose it in its shrine and veil it as before. Gradually daylight fills the Hall once more. Then follows the solemn ceremony of the partaking of the bread and wine, which are served by the Esquires, while the clear youthful voices in the dome sing the story of the Last Supper.

Gurnemanz has seated himself with the other Knights for the communion, keeping a place empty beside him. He makes a sign to Parsifal to come and sit with him, but the boy remains as he has

been from the commencement of the scene, motionless at the side of the stage, as if completely entranced. The Knights exhort each other to virtue and brotherhood in the name of the Bread and Wine, and after the voices have floated up to the heights to the strain of the Grail motive, the Knights rise, pace forward from both sides, and solemnly embrace each other.

The brief ecstasy of Amfortas has died away. He bows his head and presses his hand to his wound, and the movements of the Esquires show that the wound has broken out afresh. They tend him lovingly and help him to his litter, which they bear out of the Hall, accompanied by the shrine. The Knights follow in solemn procession as at the commencement of the scene, the orchestra pouring out the while an exquisite tissue of sound, made up of the Faith motive, the Processional motive (No. 17), the Lament of Amfortas (No. 18), and other themes.

When the whole company have left the Hall, Gurnemanz turns to Parsifal, who is still standing on the same spot, the only movement he has made being a convulsive pressure of his heart during Amfortas's cry of agony and remorse. He stands motionless, as if petrified. Gurnemanz goes up to him in ill-humour and asks him if he understood what he had seen. Parsifal, without speaking, again clutches his heart and shakes his head. Gurnemanz, disappointed and greatly irritated, reproaches him with being after all no more than a fool, opens a narrow side door, and bids him go on his way. Pushing Parsifal out and angrily closing the door after him, he himself follows the Knights out by the other door. A single alto voice from the heights sings the theme of the Pure Fool; other voices from above float down with the theme of the Grail; the bells peal out once more, and the curtain falls. The whole scene is in many respects the most moving ever put upon the stage, while the music is of a heartrending pathos and beauty.

The second act opens with an impetuous orchestral introduction, woven chiefly out of the two Klingsor motives and that of Kundry's Laughter; the piano arrangement gives no idea of the power and the colour of the music as it foams out from the orchestra in the theatre.

The curtain having risen, we see the inner keep of Klingsor's magic tower, with steps at the side leading to the edge of the battlements. All around are magical implements and necromantic apparatus; on the projecting wall, before a metal mirror, Klingsor is seated. " The time is come! " he ejaculates. His magic power has lured to his Castle the Fool, who is now drawing near in childish delight. Klingsor comes down towards the centre of the stage, and at the back a bluish vapour arises. He again seats himself before his magical apparatus, and with mysterious gestures calls into the gulf below, " Arise! To me! Thy master calls thee, nameless woman! First of witches! Rose of Hades! Herodias wert thou, and what more? Gundryggia there, Kundry here! To me! Come hither, Kundry! Thy master calls: appear! "

The rigid form of Kundry, who seems asleep, rises up in the bluish light. A convulsive movement passes through her as if she were awakening, and as the orchestra throws out *fortissimo* the descending line of her motive (No. 7) she gives a frightful cry, followed by a loud wail that gradually subsides into a low, terrified moaning. Klingsor reproaches her with having been again among the Brotherhood, where she is regarded merely as a brute beast. He gloats over the power he exercises over the Knights through her, and tells her that today the one he fears most must be met — " one strong as fools are strong."

Kundry struggles against this subjection of her other nature to the magician, but in vain; he reminds her of the secret of his power over her — the mutilation that has made him, unlike the others, insensible to her witchery. He pours out his venom upon her, the Knights, and even himself. One desire alone possesses him now — the subjugation of the proud ones who have cast him out in scorn. He has brought the King down, and soon the Grail will be his own. Kundry bewails the weakness of men and her own part in the destruction of them, and longs for release from her doom; but Klingsor bids her make ready for the temptation of the boy who is now approaching.

He mounts to the wall of the tower, and, leaning out, blows a horn that summons his knights and warders. For Kundry's benefit

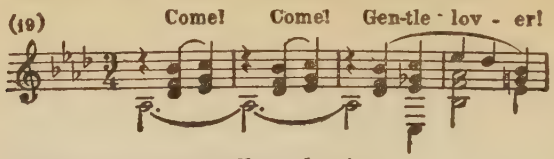
he describes the fight below, how the fearless boy has wrested Ferris's sword from him, and with it struck fiercely into the swarm of defenders, and of the execution he does there. Kundry, unable to resist the will of Klingsor, gives a shriek and disappears. The blue light is now extinguished.

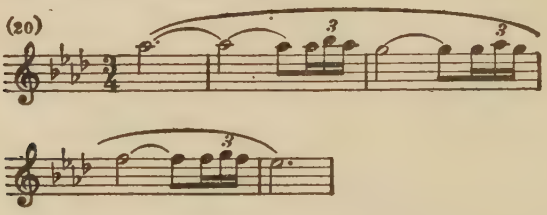
Klingsor, still watching the fight, gloats over Parsifal's maltreatment of the degenerate Knights whom, having ruined, he hates as he does everything. The victorious Parsifal, we hear, now stands laughing on the ramparts, looking down like an amazed child into the garden. Klingsor turns to call Kundry, but not perceiving her, congratulates her on already having got to work; then with a last sinister look towards Parsifal, whose coming doom he prophesies, he sinks rapidly with the whole tower, in place of which a magic garden instantly rises.

The garden, which is of tropical luxuriance, occupies the whole of the stage. Upon the ramparts at the back, Parsifal is seen gazing down in astonishment. Lovely maidens rush in from all sides, from the palace as well as from the garden, at first singly, then in numbers; they are clothed in light, soft-coloured veils, that appear to have been thrown over them hastily as if they had been startled out of sleep. In the orchestra we hear the motive of Parsifal as Hero (No. 14). Then the excitement is worked up in both orchestra and chorus.

The maidens are at first alarmed at this new-comer who has so grievously maltreated their lovers, but finding that Parsifal, who has come a little farther into the garden, means them no harm, and is, indeed, more astonished than they, they take courage again. Gradually their mood changes from wonder to gaiety; they break out into merry laughter, and as Parsifal approaches them they begin to exercise their charms upon him. Some, who have left the stage for the moment, come back completely dressed in flowers, and looking like flowers themselves. While these maidens press round the boy, the remainder leave the stage to adorn themselves in the same fashion.

Dancing and playing round Parsifal, the Flower Maidens sing an enticing strain:



that is followed by one equally seductive:

Out of these elements a chorus of ravishing beauty is built up.

Parsifal, too innocent to understand the meaning of their seductions, and half amused and half angry at their importunities, is about to flee when from a neighbouring hedge of flowers the voice of Kundry strikes in with a long-drawn-out cry of "Parsifal!" The effect in the theatre of this entry of the solo voice after the long chorus is indescribable. The name sets Parsifal's memory stirring; he remembers that once his mother called him so. He pauses in perplexity.

Kundry comes forward gradually, dismisses the Flower Maidens, whom she bids go and attend to the wounded, and when Parsifal once more looks timidly round to the hedge from which the voice came he sees a young and beautiful woman reclining on a couch of flowers, in a light, gauzy, fantastic garment of Arabian style. She has waited long for him, the son of Gamuret, she says; and then, in a long monologue of exquisite beauty, largely based upon the Herzeleide motive (No. 16), she tells him of the mother's loving care for her babe and of her death in sorrow when he left her in search of adventure.

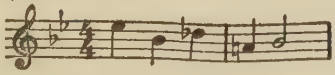
Parsifal, who has listened intently and earnestly, is overwhelmed; crushed with grief, he sinks at Kundry's feet and breaks out into a torrent of self-reproach. Kundry promises him solace from his grief, and, still reclining, she bends over Parsifal's head, gently touches his brow, and winds her arm about his neck. She

invites him to learn the rapture of love that Gamuret once learned when he burned for Herzeleide. His mother, she says, sends him her blessing, and " greets thee with this first kiss of love." Bending her head over him completely, she joins her lips to his in a long kiss, and during the silence that ensues the orchestra gives out very softly the theme of Klingsor's Magic.

Suddenly Parsifal starts up with a gesture of utter terror. His demeanour shows that some fearful change has taken place in him. He presses his hands hard against his heart as if to quiet an unbearable pain; then he cries loudly, " Amfortas! The Spear wound! " At last he understands. Illumination has come to him, and he knows the meaning of the tragedy and of the anguish of Amfortas. In himself he feels the wound of Amfortas burning; he knows now the meaning of sin, the despair of the Brotherhood, the longing for the unspotted Deliverer. Throwing himself despairingly on his knees he cries loudly, " Redeemer! Saviour! Lord of Grace! How for my sin can I atone? "

Kundry returns to the assault, but with each exercise of her wiles the now illuminated Parsifal recognises the arts by which Amfortas was ensnared: " Aye, thus she called him! This was the voice, and this was the glance; truly I know it now, what torment its smiling menace brought him! The lips too, aye, so thrilled they him; so bent this neck above him, so boldly rose her head, so fluttered her looks as in laughter; so twined she this arm round his neck; so fawningly smiled she on him. . . . His soul's salvation for that one kiss he lost! " Springing to his feet, he pushes Kundry violently from him.

She appeals now to his pity: " If e'er thy heart can feel another's sorrow, then let it suffer for mine now! " The latter words are sung to a phrase:

(21)

that hardly constitutes a motive, and to which no satisfactory name can be given, though we shall meet with it again in the third act. For endless ages, she tells Parsifal, she has waited for him — the

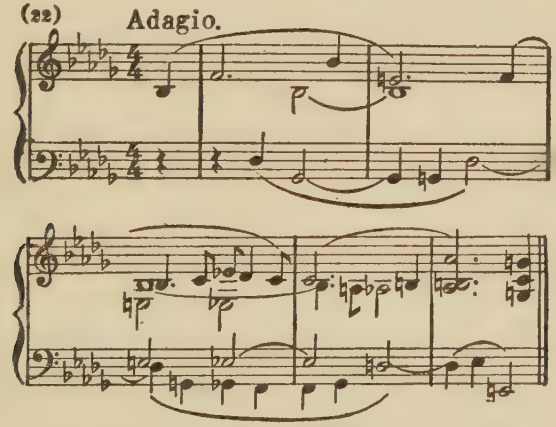
redeemer who has come so late, the redeemer whom once she reviled. In bitter self-torment she recalls her mocking of the Saviour and the " one look " he had directed upon her, that tore her heart in twain. From world to world she seeks him now in penitence and the hope of redemption; and then, and then — " a sinner sinks upon my bosom," and the old unearthly laughter breaks from her once more. " Let me," she cries, " be with thee united, and though by God and man cast forth, in thee be cleansed of sin and redeemed! "

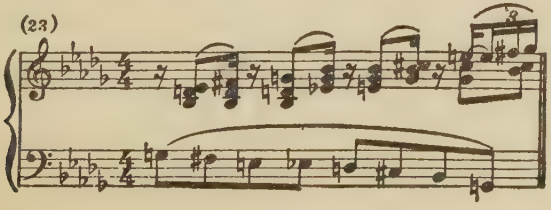
" Eternally wouldst thou be damned with me," Parsifal replies, " if but for one hour, unmindful of my mission, into thine arms I gave me! " It is true that he has been sent for her salvation, but she can be saved only by repenting of her old desire. The only fountain that can wash her clean is that which he has seen rising in the pure hearts of the Brotherhood. In wild exultation Kundry reminds him that it was through her kiss that the secret of the world's heart became revealed to him; in her arms he has become a god. Love she shall have, redemption she shall have, he replies, if she will show him the way to Amfortas. At this she breaks out furiously; never shall he find the King; let the fallen one go down to ruin, him whom she tempted and derided; " he fell by his own Spear! "

Once more she beseeches Parsifal's pity and love if only for an hour; then she would show him the way to Amfortas. She tries to embrace him, but he repulses her violently. Recovering herself with a furious cry, she calls towards the background, telling them to bar every passage and seize upon this miscreant; " for fleddest thou from here, and foundest all the ways of the world, the one that thou seekest, that path thy foot shall never find; each track, each pathway that leads thee from Kundry, thus I curse beneath thy feet! " " Thou whom I know," she shouts to Klingsor, " take him for thine own! "

Klingsor appears on the castle walls and brandishes a Spear at Parsifal. " To fitting weapon shalt thou fall! " he cries; " the Fool I win me now with his master's Spear! " He hurls the Spear, which remains suspended over Parsifal's head. Parsifal seizes it,

and holding it above his head cries, " With this sign thy magic is routed. As the wound shall be closed by the Spear that dealt it, in rack and in ruin thy lying pomp shall it lay! " He seizes the Spear, makes the sign of the Cross, and the castle collapses as if by an earthquake. The garden at once withers to a desert; the ground is strewn with faded flowers. Kundry sinks down with a cry. As Parsifal is hastening away he pauses, turns to Kundry from the top of the ruined wall, and says gravely, " Thou knowest where thou mayest find me when thou wilt! " As he disappears, Kundry raises herself a little and gazes after him as the curtain falls.

The wonderfully expressive slow orchestral introduction to the third act describes by anticipation what will be more fully disclosed to us later — the weariness and despair that have settled upon the community of Knights, which is symbolised in a motive which we may call that of Desolation:

which is followed by the Straying motive:



The " Straying " must be taken in a double sense; it signifies not only Parsifal's physical wanderings in search of Amfortas, but the confusion that has reigned in his soul. Later in the Introduction we hear a new and more poignant version of the Pure Fool theme.

The curtain having risen, we see a pleasant landscape in the domain of the Grail; it is springtime. In the background are gentle slopes covered with flowers. The foreground represents the forest; at one side is a spring; opposite this is a modest hermit's hut, built against a mass of rock. The time is early morning.

Gurnemanz, now a very old man, and dressed as a hermit with the tunic of a Knight of the Grail, comes out of the hut and listens. The sound of groaning has caught his ear; and the motive of Klingsor's Magic in the orchestra apprises us that the groaning is associated with Kundry. Gurnemanz finds the strange creature in a thorn thicket at the side of the stage. He draws her out, stiff and lifeless, and bears her to a grassy mound close by. He cries to her to " waken to the Spring "; but she is so stiff and cold that he fears that this time she is dead. But gradually the numbed body comes back to life, and as she awakens and opens her eyes she utters a piercing cry. She is now in the rough garb of a penitent, as in the first act, but her face is paler; all the wildness has gone out of her look and her demeanour.

After a long look at Gurnemanz she rises, arranges her clothing and hair, and at once humbly betakes herself to service like a maid. Her one cry at her awakening is the only sound Kundry makes throughout the whole of the act, apart from two hoarse ejaculations of " Service, service! " when Gurnemanz hints at his deserving thanks for having awakened her from her deathly sleep.

Her toil will be light now, he tells her, for the Brotherhood is almost broken up; no messages now are sent and so no messenger is required; each Knight seeks his own simple food in the herbs and roots of the forest. Kundry, going to the spring with a pitcher, points out to Gurnemanz that someone is approaching. We hear in the orchestra the motive of Parsifal as Hero (No. 14), and soon

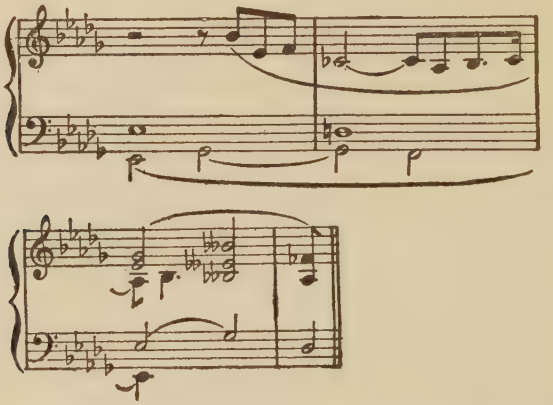
Parsifal himself appears. Kundry, having filled the pitcher, goes into the hut. Parsifal is clothed in black armour. With closed helmet and lowered spear he comes forward slowly, hesitatingly and dreamily, his head bowed as if in utter weariness, and seats himself on the little mound.

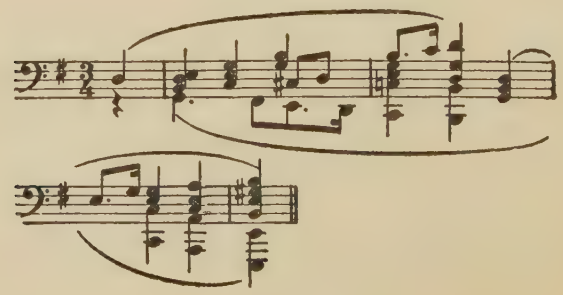
Gurnemanz, unable to draw speech from him, finally tells him that, though his vow may impose silence on him, none the less it is his duty on this holy day, Good Friday morn, to lay aside his armour and his weapons. Thereupon Parsifal raises himself in silence, thrusts the Spear into the ground, lays shield and sword beneath it, removes his helmet and places it by his weapons, then kneels before the Spear in prayer. To Kundry, who has again emerged from the hut, Gurnemanz softly says, " Dost thou recognise him? It is he who dealt our swan its death." With a slight inclination of her head Kundry signifies that she too knows him again. Gurnemanz has recognised the Spear also, and, deeply moved, he hails the holy day that has dawned.

After his prayer Parsifal rises slowly, looks around him tranquilly, recognises Gurnemanz, and gently holds out his hand to him in greeting. He tells the old man of his long wandering through terror and suffering and illusion in search of Amfortas, " him whose grievous lament I once heard in foolish wonder, and for whose healing I now deem myself appointed." Parsifal has wandered wide and endured woes innumerable, and often he has been filled with despair; many wounds have been inflicted upon him in battle, for there he would not use the Spear, which he has always carried unprofaned at his side.

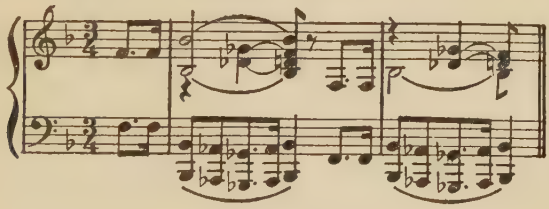
Gurnemanz breaks out into a transport of gratitude for this grace, and tells Parsifal that if indeed a curse has been lying upon him until now it is removed, for he is at last in the Grail's domain — he whom they have so long expected. He tells Parsifal of the misery that has come upon them all: how Amfortas, in despair, refused to fulfil the holy office, longing only for death; how, deprived of their divine food, the Knights' strength had ebbed away and they were no longer able to do the service on earth to which they had been appointed; and how Gurnemanz himself

came to dwell in silence in the forest, himself awaiting death now that his aged lord Titurel has died. This recital is accompanied in part by No. 22, in part by a second motive of Desolation:

(24)

Parsifal breaks out into passionate self-reproach that all these evils should have fallen upon the Brotherhood through his own foolishness and blindness. He seems about to faint; Gurnemanz supports him and lowers him into a sitting position on the mound. Kundry runs for water, but when she offers it to Parsifal she is gently repulsed by Gurnemanz, who declares that " the holy spring itself must refresh our pilgrim." At this point we hear in the orchestra a new theme — the motive of Benediction (called by some writers the Baptism motive):

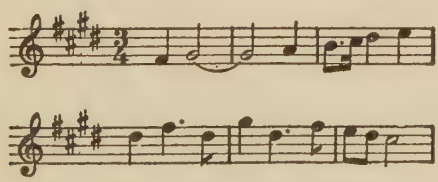
(25)

They lead Parsifal gently to the spring, where they divest him of the remainder of his armour.

They must now go to the Castle, says Gurnemanz, to attend the solemn death-rites of Titurel; in the orchestra we hear the impressive theme of the Burial of Titurel:

(26)

This day, says Gurnemanz, the long-neglected office shall once more be served. Kundry bathes the feet of Parsival, while Gurnemanz, taking some water in his hands, sprinkles Parsifal's head. Kundry draws a golden vial from her bosom, part of the contents of which she pours over Parsifal's feet, which she dries with her hair. The remainder of the contents of the vial Gurnemanz pours over Parsifal's head, and gives him a blessing. Parsifal takes some water from the fragrant spring, bends over the kneeling Kundry, sprinkles her head, and says, " Baptised be thou, and trust in the Redeemer! " Kundry bows her head to the earth and seems to weep passionately.

Turning away, Parsifal gazes in tranquil ecstasy at the forest and the fields that are now glowing in the morning light, and over lulling harmonies the oboe gives out the exquisite theme of Nature Redeemed:

(27)



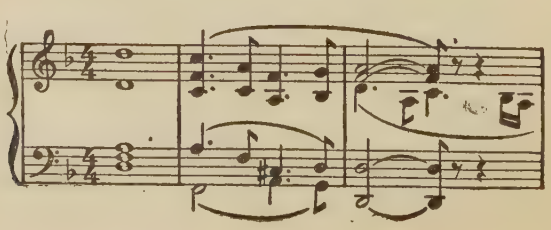
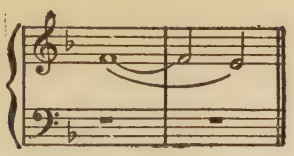
This marks the commencement of the inexpressibly lovely episode that is known in the concert-room as the Good Friday Magic

music. Parsifal speaks of the supreme beauty of the fields and flowers and the benediction that appears to rest upon them, and Gurnemanz assures him that this is the magic of Good Friday, the day on which all creation rejoices in the Saviour's sacrifice and love. Kundry looks up into Parsifal's eyes in mute entreaty; he bends over her and kisses her gently on the forehead.

Bells are heard in the distance, gradually increasing in tone, and blended with them is the motive of Titurel's Burial. Gurnemanz, who has brought his Grail Knight's mantle from the hut, helps Kundry to invest Parsifal with it; the latter solemnly takes up the Spear, and, with Kundry, follows Gurnemanz out slowly.

The grief-laden theme of the Burial of Titurel is now worked up by the orchestra into a magnificent slow march, during which another Transformation is effected, as in the first act, but this time in the reverse direction. The wood slowly vanishes and rocks appear. The bells become louder and louder, and at last the rock walls open, showing the Hall of the Grail as in Act 1, but without the tables. The Hall is faintly lighted. From one side comes a procession of Knights bearing Titurel's coffin, from the other side another procession carrying Amfortas in the litter, preceded by the covered shrine containing the Grail.

The Knights sing a moving lament over their old King, and then, turning to Amfortas, who has been placed on the couch behind the altar of the Grail, before which the coffin has been set down, they urgently implore him once more to perform his office; but raising himself wearily on his couch, he cries out again for death. The coffin is opened, and at the sight of Titurel's body all break into a cry of woe. To a strain of the utmost solemnity in the orchestra:

(28)

(29) 

Amfortas cries in anguish to his dead father, imploring him to intercede for him with the Saviour in heaven. His music is of almost unbearable beauty. Pressing round him, the Knights still more urgently insist upon his uncovering the Grail. At last he springs up in despair, rushes among the Knights, who recoil in terror from him, tears open his garments and shows the bleeding wound, and cries to them to end his sufferings with their swords; then, he says, when the sinner is no more, the Grail will shine on them again.

By this time Parsifal, accompanied by Gurnemanz and Kundry, has entered unobserved. He advances and touches Amfortas's wound with the point of the Spear, saying, "One weapon only avails — only the Spear that dealt the wound can close it." Amfortas's face glows with rapture; he staggers, as if overcome with emotion, and Gurnemanz supports him. "Be whole, purified and absolved!" says Parsifal, "for now I hold thy office. Blessed be thy suffering, for it has taught pity's highest might and wisdom's purest power to the timid Fool."

He steps towards the centre and raises the Spear high before him; all gaze in rapture on it. Ascending the altar steps, he takes the Grail from its shrine and kneels before it in silent prayer; the chalice begins to glow with a soft light, while the stage becomes darker and a stronger light comes from above. The Knights and the voices in the dome join in a song of praise and gratitude: "O highest holy marvel! Salvation to the Saviour!" A ray of light falls upon the Grail, which now glows at its brightest. A white dove descends from the dome and hovers over Parsifal's head. Kundry, gazing upwards at Parsifal, slowly sinks lifeless to the ground before him. Amfortas and Gurnemanz kneel in homage before Parsifal, who waves the Grail in blessing over the Brotherhood, and the curtain falls to the mystical strains of the theme of Faith

(No. 3), the Grail motive (No. 2), and finally the Love Feast motive (No. 1).

It was Wagner's wish that *Parsifal* should never be given elsewhere but in Bayreuth; owing to the solemnity of the subject, he felt that it required a special stage, a special occasion, a special atmosphere, and a special audience. "Never," he wrote to King Ludwig in 1882, "shall *Parsifal* be produced in any other theatre for the amusement of the public."

To the great impresario, Angelo Neumann, who was the first to popularise *The Ring* by taking it on tour throughout Europe, and to whom Wagner was under very great obligations, he wrote in 1881: "*Parsifal* is not to be performed anywhere but in Bayreuth, and this for interesting reasons, which (to give you an example) appeared so obvious to my illustrious benefactor the King of Bavaria, that he quite gave up the idea of a repetition of the Bayreuth performance in the Munich Theatre. How could I, in view of this fact, dispose of *Parsifal* in accordance with your proposal? [Neumann wanted to take this work also on tour.] Never can or may I allow it to be performed in other theatres."

Nevertheless, if we are to believe Neumann himself (and there seems no reason to doubt his story), Wagner did actually at one time as good as grant him permission to produce *Parsifal* elsewhere. In his *Reminiscences of Richard Wagner* Neumann tells us that when he was in Bayreuth in August 1882, arranging a fresh contract in connection with *The Ring*, Wagner, who at that time was a little out of tune with his Bayreuth surroundings, gave him a verbal promise that at their next meeting he would give him a contract for *Parsifal* also.

A day or two later Neumann called at Wahnfried, and after *The Ring* contract had been completed they turned to the *Parsifal* agreement, which stipulated that if Wagner should decide to allow the work to be given anywhere but at Bayreuth, the exclusive rights for all countries should be given to Neumann. Wagner sat down at the writing-desk with the pen in his hand; he remained for a while lost in thought, then turned round slowly to Neumann and said in a low voice, "Neumann, I have given you my promise,

and if you hold me to it I will sign the agreement; but you would give me great pleasure if you would not press the point today. You have my word that the rights of producing *Parsifal* shall go to no one but you."

Neumann answered, " Master, when you tell me that I should be giving you a great pleasure it goes without saying that I am content with your word." " Then," he continues, " Wagner said with emphasis, ' Neumann, I thank you! ' and a strong pressure of the hand and a kiss closed one of the most difficult moments of my life. In the avenue leading to the house my son was waiting for me. I told him what had happened in this notable hour, and added, ' Carl, today, by renouncing *Parsifal,* I have given up millions.' ' Father,' my seventeen-year-old son replied, ' that Richard Wagner should thank you as he did is worth more to me than millions.' "

As early as 1901 Wagner's widow addressed to the German Reichstag a memorial praying that in the case of *Parsifal* the ordinary rule of the expiry of copyright thirty years after the author's death should not be operative. When the thirty years were nearly run out another appeal was made for the extension of the period, but without success. The copyright expired at the end of 1913, and in the first days of January 1914 *Parsifal* was performed in a number of European opera houses. Some time before then, however, the work had been performed at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, in spite of Cosima Wagner's protest, the producers being protected by a legal technicality.

THE RHINEGOLD

TWENTY-SIX years elapsed between the first conception of *The Ring of the Nibelung* and the completion of the gigantic work. During his Dresden period Wagner had become deeply interested in the Scandinavian, German, and Icelandic sagas. As usual with him, he dealt with the traditional material in a way of his own, selecting, dovetailing, piecing. His first attempt to reduce the colossal mass of material to a manageable dramatic form was a poem entitled *Siegfried's Death,* which he wrote in November 1848.

The Ring is often reproached with being longwinded and repetitive. There is some truth in the latter charge, and the reason for it is that Wagner wrote the poem of *The Ring* backwards, so to speak. *Siegfried's Death* virtually corresponds with the poem that we now know as *The Twilight of the Gods,* the last of the four evenings of *The Ring.* As it represents the culmination of the long action, the earlier incidents of the story have to be told to the audience through the mouths of the characters on the stage.

As the years went on, Wagner felt that not only was the subject too big for a single opera, but the work he had already written required to be led up to by another; so to *Siegfried's Death* he prefixed, in the summer of 1851, a second drama which he called at that time *Young Siegfried;* this corresponds to the present *Siegfried,* the third evening of *The Ring.* In the following year he renamed the two dramas already completed, and placed in front of them yet another, *The Valkyrie.* He still felt, however, that the action as presented on the stage was not as clear as it might be;

so in front of *The Valkyrie* he placed *The Rhinegold,* which he describes as a " Fore-Evening " to the three evenings proper of *The Ring.* A few copies of the complete poem were printed for private distribution in 1853.

The music was composed in the proper order of the dramas. *The Rhinegold* was written between 1853 and 1854, *The Valkyrie* between the summer of 1854 and the spring of 1856. In the autumn of the latter year he began work at the music of *Siegfried,* and by July 1857 had finished the first act and part of the second.

By this time it had become perfectly clear to Wagner that the ordinary German opera house was quite incapable of producing so difficult a work, and the old desire for a theatre of his own once more arose within him. Meanwhile, in order to keep himself before the public, he wrote what he thought were the more practicable operas of *Tristan* and *The Mastersingers,* and it was not until July 1865 that he cast his eyes upon *Siegfried* again. Once more he was interrupted, however, and the real resumption of work upon the second act dates from February 1869. *Siegfried* was finished by the autumn and work commenced upon *The Twilight of the Gods,* which, so far as the actual composition was concerned, was finished in February 1872, though the orchestration was not completed until November 1874.

Meanwhile, despairing of ever seeing the titanic work on the stage, Wagner had issued the poem to the general public in 1863, with a preface in which he expressed the hope that a German prince might some day be found who would be at once powerful enough and enlightened enough to realise this dream of the poet-musician.

A year after that, in May 1864, Wagner found his deliverer in the young King Ludwig of Bavaria. The association with the King, however, was not without its annoyances for Wagner. Ludwig's impatience to hear each of Wagner's new works was so great that he could not wait until the gigantic scheme of *The Ring* was completed and a special theatre had been built for the work; and, very much against Wagner's will, *The Rhinegold* was performed at Munich on the 22nd September, 1869, and *The Valkyrie*

on the 26th June, 1870. The other two operas of *The Ring* did not see the light until August 1876, when the whole work was performed for the first time at Bayreuth under Hans Richter.

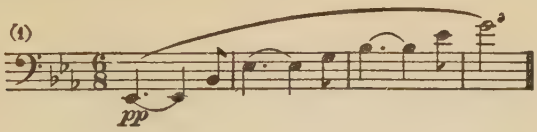
It is impossible, in the space at our disposal here, to go into details with regard to the various sources from which Wagner derived his material, or to show how he altered and condensed the various sagas; but the reader who wishes to pursue the subject further may profitably read *The Fall of the Nibelung*, done into English by Margaret Armour, *The Volsunga Saga*, translated by William Morris and E. Magnusson, and William Morris's epic poem *Sigurd the Volsung*.

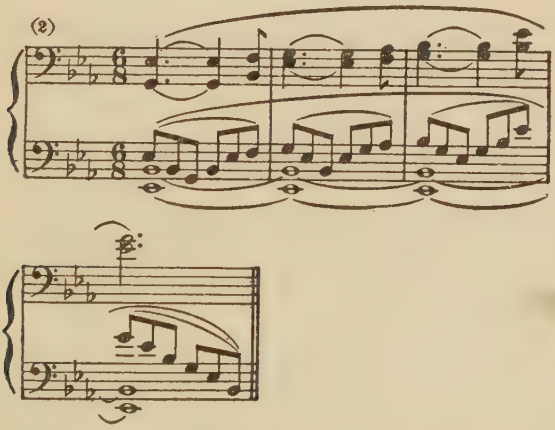
The central motive of the drama as Wagner has conceived it is Wotan's love for power. To consolidate his power he has had a great castle, Valhalla, built for him by the giants. For the ultimate payment of the giants' wage he has trusted more or less to luck. When the time arrives for payment it comes about, in ways that will be described in the following analysis, that he has to satisfy them with gold stolen from the Rhinemaidens by Alberich, upon which, when it was taken from him in turn by Wotan, Alberich has laid a curse. From the gold Alberich has had made for himself a ring that confers on its possessor power over the world; and this ring passes into the possession of one of the giants, Fafner.

Wotan's problem, during the three later evenings of *The Ring*, is to ensure that the ring will come into the possession of someone who will not use it, as Alberich would were he to regain possession of it, for the destruction of the gods. The devious ways by which this is brought about are best told by a straightforward account of *The Ring* as it is set upon the stage in four consecutive evenings.

The Prelude to *The Rhinegold* is of an originality that must have staggered people who heard it for the first time in 1869. It consists of nothing else but a persistent sounding, for 136 bars, of the tonality of E flat. It is meant to suggest the Rhine; and the idea is first of all of a sort of ground-swell, then of heavy waves, then of lighter and still lighter waves. First the double basses give out a deep-down and long-held E flat, over which, later, the bassoons impose a B

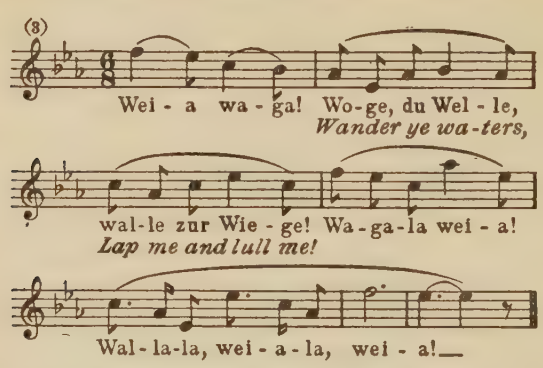
flat. Later still the horns give out softly over this open fifth the following theme:



The movement of the waters seems to become gradually more rapid, and No. 1 becomes metamorphosed into what, in the later scenes of the work, does duty as the typical Rhine motive:

The sense of irresistible motion goes on increasing as the theme is still further altered rhythmically and taken up into higher and higher registers of the orchestras.

At about the 130th bar the curtain rises, showing us the bottom of the Rhine. In the upper part of the scene the river seems to be flowing restlessly, while towards the bottom, for a space about the height of a man above the stage, its waters resolve themselves into a mist. Craggy rocks jut up everywhere. A greenish twilight, lighter above than below, reigns in the water. When the curtain rises a Rhinemaiden, Woglinde, is seen swimming gracefully round a rock in the centre of the stage, the pointed summit of which is

visible in the lighter part of the river. When she begins to sing, the music modulates for the first time; and the sudden change to the key of A flat after 136 bars of E flat is electrifying:



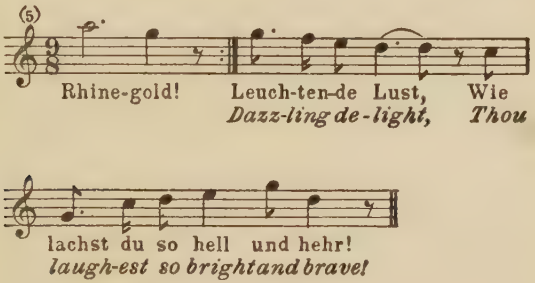
Woglinde is joined by her sister Wellgunde, and to the pair of them comes a little later the third of their number, Flosshilde. The three tease and chase each other in sport, darting like fish from rock to rock, laughing merrily, though they are conscious of a little naughtiness in not attending more closely to their appointed task — that of guarding the gold.

Meanwhile, from a dark chasm below, Alberich, a hairy and uncouth gnome, has emerged. He clambers up to a rock, pauses, and, still hardly visible to the audience, watches with great delight the play of the Rhinemaidens, whom he accosts in accents as uncouth as his appearance and his movements. When the Rhinemaidens see him they are horrified at his ugliness, and think it wise to guard the gold against a possible foe. Recovering a little from their first fears, however, they coquettishly invite him to come higher, which he does by clambering, though with frequent fallings back and much spluttering, to the top of the rock.

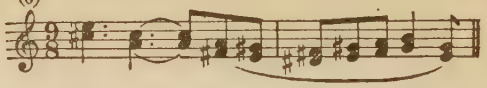
He tries to embrace one or other of the maidens, but all elude him gracefully and mock him. Changing their tone, they lure him on further by means of pretended cajolements, and then, when he believes that his happiness is on the point of being completed by one of them, they break away from him again with mocking laugh-

ter. It is in vain that he pursues them; in spite of his uncanny agility he is no match for these nimble swimmers. At last, losing his temper, he pauses breathless, foaming with rage, and shakes his clenched fist up at the maidens.

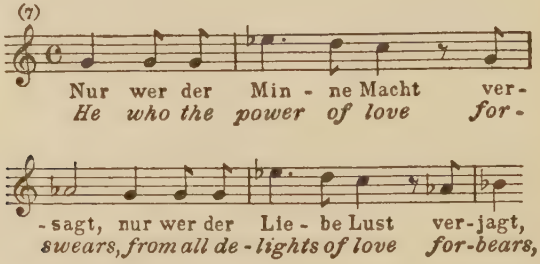
But just then a curious spectacle arrests his attention. Upon the waters there comes an ever-increasing glow, which gradually concentrates on the peak of the central rock till it becomes a blinding golden gleam, that in turn sheds a golden radiance over the surrounding waters. It is the gold waking from its sleep; and the Gold motive is given out by the horns:

The maidens greet the lovely sight in rapture:

Their trio ended, the maidens swim round the rock in delight, and in reply to Alberich's questions they tell him of this marvellous eye " that wakes and sleeps in the depths, and fills the waves with its light." To the armorous gnome the gold, of the properties of which he knows nothing, seems a poor thing in comparison with the love of the maidens; but they explain to him that " the world's wealth would be won by the master who from the Rhinegold fashioned the Ring that measureless might would confer " — and the wood-wind of the orchestra give out softly the typical Ring motive:

(6)



The maidens' father, it seems, has ordered them to guard the gold carefully, so that no robber should ravish it from them. One alone, they continue, can shape the gold to a ring — one who has forsworn love:

(7)

Nur wer der Min - ne Macht ver-
He who the power of love for-
- sagt, nur wer der Lie - be Lust ver-jagt,
swears, from all de - lights of love for-bears,

The gold is safe then, says Wellgunde, " for all that liveth loveth; no one will forfeit love's rapture." " And least of all," adds Woglinde, " this languishing imp, with love's desire ravaged and racked! "

But the sight of the gold and the talk of the maidens have wrought a change in Alberich. Since his love is scorned, and with the gold he can win the mastery of the world, he will forswear love and choose power. Springing furiously over the rocks he clambers up to the central one, the maidens scattering in terror before him. With a final spring he attains the summit of the rock, stretches his hand out towards the gold, and cries, " Your light, lo, I put out; I wrench from the rock the gold, forge me the Ring of revenge; for hear me, ye floods; Love now curse I for ever! " With terrible force he tears the gold from the rock and plunges with it into the depths, where he disappears.

With the passing of the gold, thick darkness suddenly descends on the scene. The distracted maidens dive below after the robber, and the waters seem to fall with them into the depths below. From the lowest depths Alberich's shrill and mocking laughter is heard.

The rocks disappear in the darkness, and the whole stage appears to fill with billowing black water. Gradually the waves change into clouds, which in turn disperse in a fine mist as an increasingly strong light seems to pierce them from behind.

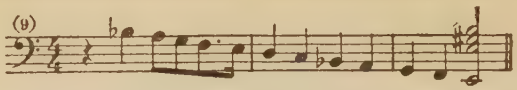
The orchestra makes play with various themes, especially the characteristic cry of the Rhinemaidens (the first bar of No. 5), the motive of Renunciation of Love (No. 7), and the motive of the Ring; and when the mist has entirely lifted away we see an open space on a mountain height.

At one side, on a flowery bank, lies the supreme god Wotan, with his wife Fricka by him; both are asleep. The light of the dawning day increases, and on the top of a cliff in the background there appears a magnificent castle with glittering battlements. Between this and the foreground is a deep valley, through which the Rhine is supposed to flow.

For a time neither of the sleeping figures stirs, while from the brass of the orchestra there wells up the noble motive of Valhalla:

At last Fricka awakes; her eyes fall on the castle, and with a startled movement she calls upon Wotan to awaken also. Wotan, still dreaming, muses upon the security of his mighty castle, and of the " measureless might " that is now to be his. When fully awake he raises himself slightly and hails the castle, " the everlasting work " that is at last ended, the " stately fortress, peerless and proud."

Fricka, however, cannot share his satisfaction; what delights him fills her with dread. The fort, it is true, is his, thanks to the labour of the giants; but what of Freia, the goddess of youth and beauty who has been given to the giants in pledge of payment for their work? The mention of the agreement between Wotan and the giants is accompanied in the lower strings of the orchestra by the Treaty motive:



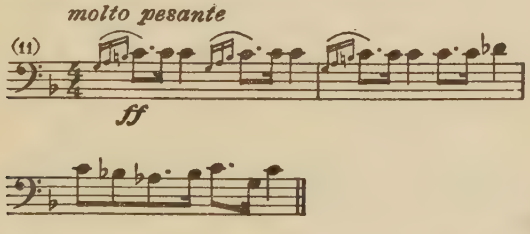
Wotan carelessly brushes Fricka's fears aside; the work has been done, and as for the price, let her have no fear about that. Woman-like, she breaks out into reproaches of him for having, behind her back, pledged her radiant sister Freia for the payment, but Wotan tranquilly asks her whether the castle was not as much her wish as his. True, rejoins Fricka; but she makes clear her own motive for having desired the castle. Distressed at her husband's many wanderings from home, she had thought to keep him by her side by means of this magnificent toy. She finds, however, that his own idea in building the castle had merely been to win security while he could work out his plans for overlordship of the world.

The dialogue between the pair runs very much on the lines that, judging by his letters, the conversations between Wagner and his wife Minna must frequently have done. Wotan smilingly claims his right to go " ranging and changing " through the earth, while Fricka reproaches him with scorning " love and a woman's worth " in order to satisfy his lust for power. Wotan pleads that so far from despising women, rather does he honour them more than Fricka likes; and he reminds her how, when he was wooing her, he left an eye in forfeit — an incident that accounts for Wotan always appearing on the stage with a lock of hair covering one of his eyes. He assures Fricka that he has no intention of letting Freia be lost to them; and just at that moment Freia herself enters, as if in hasty flight, crying, " Help me, sister! Shelter me, brother! "

The giants, Fasolt and Fafner, it seems, are coming over the mountains to claim her. Wotan calmly brushes their threat aside; his faith is in Loge. Fricka reproaches him passionately for putting his trust in that trickster (Loge is the elusive god of fire); but Wotan tells her that, while he can rely upon his own strength where strength alone is needed, Loge's arts are useful to him where craft and deceit are necessary. It was under Loge's advice that

Wotan promised Freia to the giants; and he still has faith that when the crisis comes Loge will help him out of his difficulty.

Freia, to the accompaniment of the motive that was heard in the orchestra when she entered:

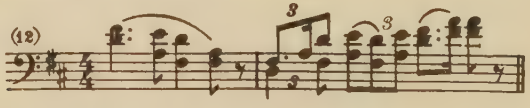
cries urgently to her absent brothers to help her — to Donner, the god of thunder, and his brother Froh. Despairingly Fricka tells her that all have abandoned her, and a lumpish, plodding theme in the orchestra, the rhythm of which is strongly marked by the kettledrums, announces the coming of the giants:

They are men of gigantic stature, clothed in rough animal skins, and carrying strong staves.

Pointing to the castle, Fasolt, who is the more amiable of the two, reminds Wotan that the fortress has been completed, and demands the promised wage. Wotan affects to be ignorant of the terms of the compact, but the Treaty motive in the orchestra reminds us of the solemnity of his pledged word. Fasolt recalls to him that the price was Freia, whose beauty and eternal youth have touched a tender spot in the heart of the susceptible giant. Wotan quickly and roughly tells them they must be mad to dream of such a thing: let them ask some other payment; Freia he will not grant.

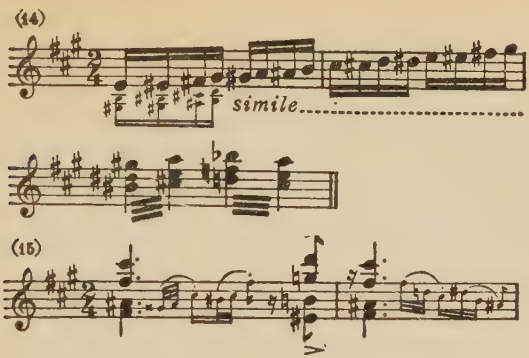
For a moment the giants cannot believe their ears; can it be that the great god Wotan thinks so little as this of his pledged word, that the runes of solemn compact graven upon the shaft of

his spear are, so to speak, only a scrap of paper? Very earnestly, and with a good deal of dignity, Fasolt reminds the god that what he is he is only by treaties; " in form set forth, well defined is thy might." He is as wise as they, the lumbering giants, are foolish; but a curse will be upon all his wisdom, and peace will be no more on earth, if Wotan does not honour the bond he has made.

Once more Wotan pretends that the thought of giving Freia to louts such as they never seriously entered his mind; and once more Fasolt earnestly reproaches him for this breach of his word.

Fasolt is of a somewhat softer type than his brother, who now breaks in roughly. For Freia herself he cares little; but it were well, he thinks, to take the maid away, because, deprived of the golden apples that grow in her garden, which she alone can tend — the apples that confer on her kindred youth everlasting — the gods will be under a blight; sick and old and weak, they will waste away. As Fafner speaks, the lovely theme of Freia as the Giver of Youth is intoned by the horns:

The atmosphere now grows tense. Muttering anxiously, " Loge tarries long! " Wotan asks the giants to accept another reward, but they refuse, and make as if to seize upon Freia. Donner and Froh enter at this moment; Froh clasps Freia in his arms, while Donner, the god of thunder, placing himself in front of the giants, threatens them with his huge hammer.

The Treaty motive is heard once more in the orchestra as Wotan, stretching out his spear between the disputants, reminds them that what is written upon it is written; force, therefore, cannot avail. Freia gives a despairing cry of " Woe's me! Woe's me! Wotan forsakes me! " Wotan, who has turned away in perplexity, sees Loge coming, and in the orchestra we hear the elusive, flickering themes associated with that god:



The last of these is the motive always associated with Loge's Fire Magic. Loge now climbs up from the valley at the back; he is in flame-coloured garb, and both his hair and his ceaseless gestures suggest the flickering of flames. He tells them how, after the building of the castle, while others were dreaming of the joys of house and hearth, he, true to his nature, went wandering over the earth.

Wotan puts a check on his garrulity; he reminds him that he is disliked by the gods, and that Wotan is his only friend, for the others do not trust him. Now he must have counsel from Loge. When the giants, before they built the fortress, demanded Freia as quittance, Wotan would never have given his promise had not Loge pledged his word that when the time came he would extricate him from his difficulty. That he promised to look for some means by which Freia could be redeemed, Loge admits; but how could he ever have promised definitely to find " some sure way out where no way lies? "

Fricka turns on him fiercely. " See," she says to Wotan, " the traitorous rogue thou didst trust! " " Loge art thou named, but liar [*Lüge*] I call thee! " says Froh; while the irate Donner, always inclined to settle differences by physical force, raises his hammer and threatens to quench Loge's fire. But Wotan steps between them and orders peace. They do not know, he says, Loge's wiles; the charier he is with his counsel, the craftier this always is.

The giants again becoming urgent, Wotan turns sharply to

Loge and asks him where he has been wandering so long. The elusive one, commiserating with himself on the ingratitude that is always his lot, tells them that, like the faithful fellow he is, he has been wandering unceasingly to all the ends of the earth, searching for a ransom for Freia that would be acceptable to the giants. It was all in vain, however; "in the whole wide world nought is so rich that man will value it more than woman's wondrous delight." All show astonishment and perplexity, while Loge, over a symphonic treatment in the orchestra of a new version of the Freia motive:

(16)

tells them how, wherever life ebbs and flows in the world, in water, earth, or air, he had asked of all men what they would prize above woman's love, and had everywhere received the same answer.

One alone had he met with who had forsworn love for gold. From the heart-broken Rhinemaidens he had learned how Alberich the Nibelung, having tried in vain to win their love, in revenge had robbed them of the gold, which now he values more than all the grace of woman. To Wotan the Rhinemaidens have sent a message by him — an appeal to punish the thief and return the gold to the waters. "This to tell thee I promised the maidens," says Loge: "his trust has Loge now fulfilled."

Angry and perplexed, Wotan turns to him with a petulant question — "Myself seest thou in need; what help for others have I?" But Loge's words have sunk deep into Fasolt and Fafner. Alberich has always been the enemy of the giants, and now that the possession of the gold confers such power upon him he will surely bring some new mischief upon them. What is it, Fafner asks Loge, that makes the gold so precious in the Nibelung's eyes? Loge explains that so long as the gold remained sleeping in the waters it was a mere toy for laughing children; but that if it be fashioned to a round ring it will confer measureless might on its possessor, and win him the mastery of the world.

It is not only the giants who have been stirred by Loge's recital. The evil latent in the gold, now that it has been wrested from its primal innocence, begins to act upon the others, each according to his nature. Wotan reflects upon the power and wealth that may come from this gold, of which he has already heard rumours. Fricka thinks that the glittering metal might serve for the adornment of woman's beauty; and Loge assures her that with it a wife could secure the fidelity of her husband.

Fricka turns cajolingly to Wotan and softly insinuates her own desire for the gold; while Wotan, wrapped up in his own dreams, feels the impulse to win him the Ring. By what art, he asks Loge, is this Ring to be wrought? Only by a certain magic rune, replies Loge; no one knows it, and it can be learned only by him who forswears love. At this Wotan turns away in ill-humour, to the sardonic amusement of Loge, who knows the great god's weaknesses. "That does not suit thee!" he says. In any case Wotan is now too late. Alberich did not delay; he forswore love, made himself master of the spell, and has wrought himself the Ring.

All now recognise the danger that threatens the gods, who will become slaves to the dwarf if the Ring be not wrested from him; though Wotan's motive is even stronger — he wants not merely to protect the gods but to make himself omnipotent. But how to get the Ring from Alberich? "By theft!" says Loge curtly and harshly. "What a thief stole, steal thou from the thief: could aught be more simply acquired?" But Alberich is strong and crafty, and the utmost guile will be necessary against him before the Ring can be taken from him and restored to the Rhinemaidens. This suggestion once more brings out the secret weakness at the heart of them all; Wotan is not disposed to enter upon the undertaking for the sake of others, while Fricka, as the protectress of virtue, has a grudge against the Rhinemaidens, who have wickedly lured many men to their lair.

A great struggle is going on in Wotan's breast. While he ponders his problems in silence, and the other gods keep their eyes on him in mute expectation, Fafner takes Fasolt aside and urges him to demand the gold rather than Freia. Fasolt's gestures indicate

that he has finally been persuaded, though against his will, and the giants once more advance towards Wotan. Fafner announces their decision; they will leave Freia in freedom on condition that Wotan procures for them the Nibelung's gold.

Wotan protests that he is powerless to give them what is not his, and a quarrel breaks out, which is ended by the giants taking Freia away. They will hold her, they say, as a pledge until nightfall; then they will return; but if the ransom is not ready, no longer will they parley; Freia is forfeit and shall dwell with them for ever. The shrieking Freia is dragged away by the giants, and gloom settles upon the gods.

Soon a pale mist, that gradually grows denser, steals over the stage; it gives the gods an increasingly wan and aged appearance. Loge taunts them with the change that has come over them: " How sick and wan and withered ye seem! All the bloom has fled your faces, and dimmed is the light of your eyes! Courage, Froh, 'tis yet but dawn! From thy hand, Donner, now droppest the hammer? What grief hath Fricka? Is she afflicted for Wotan, gloomy and grey, grown an old man in a trice? "

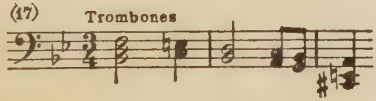
To moving music the gods bewail their weakness, the explanation of which is given them by Loge: Freia has left them; of her fruit they have not eaten that day — the golden apples from her garden that each day renew their youth. On Loge the deprivation has no effect; Freia has always been sparing of the fruit to him, while by nature he is only half a god. But for the others, he tells them, the loss of the goddess is critical; deprived of the apples, and growing old and haggard, they will become the scorn of the world, and the race of the gods will cease.

At a reproachful wail from Fricka, Wotan starts up with a sudden resolution. He bids Loge come with him to Nibelheim, the abode of the Nibelungs, where he means to win the gold. After a moment's ironic pretence that he believes it is Wotan's desire to restore the gold to the Rhinemaidens, Loge asks, " Shall we descend through the Rhine? " " No! " replies Wotan. " Then swing ourselves through the sulphur cleft," says Loge; " slip down it yonder with me! " He goes to the side of the stage and disappears

in a cleft, from which a sulphurous vapour at once arises. Telling the others to wait there till the evening, when their departed youth shall be ransomed with the gold, Wotan descends after Loge into the cleft. The sulphurous vapour rapidly spreads over the entire stage, filling it with clouds, and rendering those on the stage invisible.

In many theatres the opera is divided into two acts at this point. Wagner, however, intended the *Rhinegold* to be played from start to finish without a break, the change of scene here being effected under cover of the thick black clouds into which the vapour thickens. This cloud gradually changes into a solid rocky chasm which moves continually upwards, so that the stage appears to be sinking deeper and deeper into the earth. The music accompanying this transformation is made up of a variety of motives, including those associated with Loge, the Renunciation motive (No. 7) in a new form:

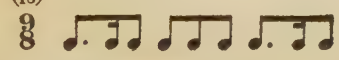
(17) Trombones



themes associated with Alberich in the opening scene of the opera, and the Gold motive (No. 4), all woven into a continuous symphonic tissue.

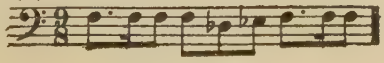
After a while a dark red glow shines from several quarters in the distance, and an increasing noise as of smithying is heard on all sides. At this point a pronounced rhythm:

(18)



begins to dominate the orchestra; this, in the later stages of *The Ring,* and especially in *Siegfried,* is always associated with the idea of smithying. It is hammered out now by eighteen anvils behind the scene, while in the orchestra it takes the following more definite melodic shape:

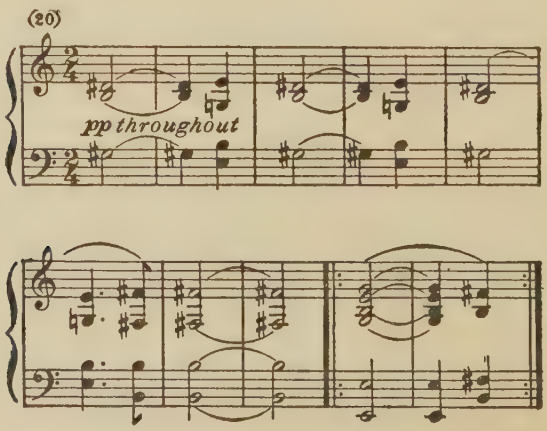
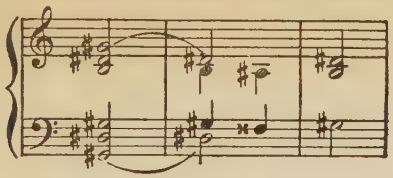
(19)



The music rises to an almost deafening clamour, then subsides somewhat as the clang of the anvils dies away. We now see a subterranean cavern that stretches farther than the eye can reach, and appears to open on every side into narrow shafts.

By the power of the gold Alberich has made all the other Nibelungs subservient to him; they are now working to extract treasure from the earth and cast it into forms for Alberich's pleasure and profit. He is seen dragging one of the tiniest of the Nibelungs, his brother, Mime, a poor little shrinking dwarf, out of a cleft at the side of the stage. Mime had been set to do a special piece of work, and Alberich, with considerable rough usage, is demanding it from him. The shrinking Mime protests that all has been done as he has been told, and he implores Alberich not to nip his ears with his nails so fiercely. Releasing him, Alberich demands to be shown the work.

Mime asks for a little more time, in case something may be lacking in the work; but the suspicious Alberich making to catch him by the ear again, Mime in terror lets fall a piece of metal work which he had been convulsively clutching in his hand. Alberich picks it up and examines it closely. In the orchestra we hear, in the muted horns, one of the most curiously expressive motives in the whole of *The Ring*:



This is the motive of the Tarnhelm, a metal network that, worn on the head, confers invisibility on its wearer. When we first hear the theme, which is at the moment Mime drops the object and Alberich picks it up, it appears in a fragmentary form only; our quotation shows it in its full form as it appears shortly afterwards and in the later stages of *The Ring*.

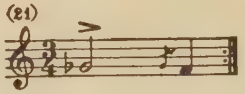
The motive is one of the most remarkable of Wagner's inventions; the hollowness of the harmonies, the slight strangeness in the modulations, and the mysterious colouring all combine to give it an extraordinary suggestiveness.

When Alberich examines the work he finds that everything is as he ordered, and he turns roughly on Mime, who, as he guesses, has been trying to keep the magic headdress for himself. Alberich puts the Tarnhelm on his head and at once disappears, only a column of vapour being visible where he had been standing; and the orchestra now gives out, for the first time, the Tarnhelm motive in full.

From the middle of the vapour comes Alberich's voice asking Mime if he can see him now. Mime looks round him in astonishment and says, " Where art thou? I see thee no more." " Then feel me, thou idle rogue! Take that for thy thievish thoughts! " says the invisible Alberich, and we see Mime writhing under the blows he receives from a scourge, the strokes of which are audible, though the scourge itself cannot be seen.

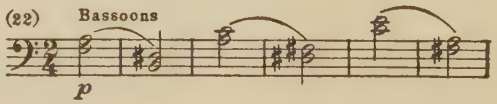
Mime howls with pain, and Alberich laughs loudly and harshly. Then, in a vehement tirade, he gloats over the race of the Nibelungs, who will now have to bow the knee to him, for everywhere he can secretly spy on them: " Rest and peace he will refuse you; still must ye serve him, though he be unseen; where ye least shall perceive him, trembling expect him! Thralls to him are ye for

ever! Hoho! Hoho! Hear him, he nears: the Nibelungs' lord! " The servitude of the Nibelungs is symbolised by a descending figure:



that is used in different forms throughout the work; it has already been associated with Alberich in various ways, and the basis of it will be seen in the motive of the Renunciation of Love.

The column of vapour now disappears towards the back of the stage, carrying with it, we are to understand, Alberich, whose roaring and scolding are heard receding into the distance. Evidently he is driving with blows the Nibelungs before him, and their howls and shrieks are also heard dying away until they become inaudible. Mime, left alone upon the stage, has cowered down in pain. In the distance we hear the Smithying motive — suggesting that the enslaved Nibelungs are at work again — combined with the motive of Servitude (No. 21).

Wotan and Loge now descend from a cleft. " This is Nibelheim," says Loge. Mime soon attracts their attention by a succession of pitiful howls, and Loge, who knows him, asks the dwarf what it is that " pricks and pinches him so." Mime bewails his hard lot, while the orchestra gives out a curious theme known as the Reflection motive:

This is always used in the later stages of the work when Mime is pondering upon or speaking about his difficult problems, and we are probably intended to understand here that he is already thinking how he can free himself of his servitude to Alberich. Sometimes the motive is suggested by the use of merely two of the chords. He has a cruel brother, he tells the gods, who has made him his bondsman; from the ravished Rhinegold Alberich has

forged a Ring, by the power of which he has made himself master of the rest of his race.

To the rhythm of the Smithying motive, poor Mime, in a quite charming lyrical passage, tells the gods how happy the Nibelungs once were, working in their freedom, making gay little trinkets for the adornment of their women, and laughing lightly at their toil; but now Alberich compels them to creep into caverns and to work without ceasing for him alone. By the help of the Ring he can descry treasure concealed in the clefts; and then the others have to dig it out and melt it and fashion it into bars for Alberich to heap upon his hoard. Lately he had given Mime instructions to make him a helm.

Mime's mother-wit had perceived the power that lay in the work, and he had tried to keep the helm for himself, hoping thus to escape from Alberich's domination — even, perhaps, to overthrow the tyrant, to take from him the Ring, and make himself master. But alas, he goes on to tell Loge, though he could make the helm, he could not find the magic formula that gave it its power! Alberich alone knew this, and having taken possession of the helm and murmured the spell, he had vanished, and, invisible, laid his scourge upon poor Mime's back. Howling and sobbing he cries, " Such thanks for my toil, poor fool, I won! " He rubs his back ruefully, and the gods laugh. Perplexed by this, Mime observes them more attentively, and asks who they are. " Friends of thine," says Loge, " who will free the Nibelung folk from their need."

The Smithying motive reappears in the orchestra, combined with the theme of Servitude, and Mime, hearing Alberich approaching, shrinks back in terror. Wotan quietly seats himself on a stone, saying, " We'll wait for him here! " and Loge leans by his side. A crowd of Nibelungs rushes in from the cave below, driven by Alberich, who has removed the Tarnhelm from his head and hung it on his girdle.

The dwarfs are laden with gold and silver work, which, under the incessant goading of Alberich, they pile up in a hoard. He is still cursing and threatening them when he suddenly perceives Wotan and Loge. His suspicions aroused, he drives Mime away

with his whip into the crowd of Nibelungs, and bids them all, if they would escape a flogging, delve into the new-made shaft and bring him the gold. Drawing the Ring from his fingers he kisses it and stretches it out threateningly: " Tremble in terror, downtrodden hosts! Quick, obey the Ring's great lord! " Howling and shrieking, the Nibelungs, with Mime among them, separate and run in all directions down into the shafts.

Alberich now turns a long and suspicious glance on Wotan and Loge, and asks them what they are doing there. In tranquil tones Wotan tells him that strange tidings have reached his ears of the wonders worked by Alberich in Nibelheim; and he and his companion have come down into the earth in the hope of seeing some of these wonders with their own eyes.

The gnome sneers at this pretence, but Loge reproachfully asks him if he does not know him; who is it, when he cowered in sunless caves, who gave him light and comfort in fire? What use would all his forging have been did Loge not light his forge fire?

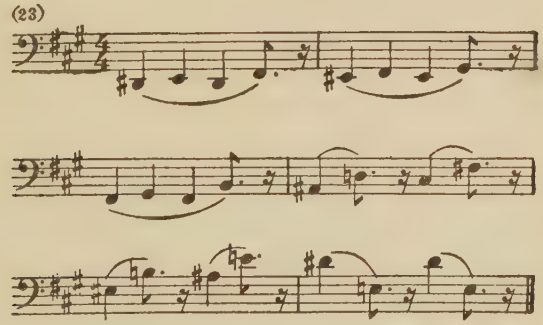
But Alberich is not to be cajoled. He does not trust the shifty Loge, and, strong in the possession of the Ring, he defies the newcomers. Enormous treasures, he tells them, he has already amassed, and every day shall bring an increase of it. With this treasure he will win the world; even the gods, lapped in zephyrs there aloft, who spend their lives in laughter and love, shall one day bow to his will. He himself has forsworn love, and all who live shall be made to forswear it. The gods, on their radiant heights, despise the black elves who live in the bowels of the earth; but let them beware, for this gold shall be their undoing! " First ye men shall bow to my might, then your winsome women, who my wooing despised, shall sate the lust of the dwarf, though love they deny! " Laughing venomously, he warns the gods of the coming day when the hosts of night shall rise from the depths and destroy them.

Wotan turns on him in anger and disgust, but the crafty Loge, stepping between them, adopts his oiliest diplomatic tone. Who could fail to admire, he asks, the wonderful work of Alberich? If he can do all he says he can, he will indeed be the mightiest of all on

earth. When he holds aloft his Ring, it seems, the Nibelung hosts must cower before him. But what of when he is alseep? Suppose someone were then to steal the Ring from his hand?

Alberich falls into the trap; his vanity is aroused at this doubt of his cunning. He tells them of the magic properties of the Tarnhelm, under whose protection, made invisible, he can sleep in safety. Loge professes to be lost in admiration of his wisdom, but artfully insinuates another trifling doubt; how can they be sure that the Tarnhelm is all that Alberich claims it to be, unless he proves it? The raging Alberich demands a test; into what shape shall he turn himself? " Into any shape thou wilt," replies Loge, " so that thou make me dumb with amazement."

The mysterious Tarnhelm motive is given out by the orchestra; Alberich puts on the Tarnhelm, murmurs the spell, instantly disappears, and in his place a huge serpent is seen writhing on the ground and stretching out its open jaws towards Wotan and Loge. The Dragon theme, that is of importance later, is given to the tubas:



Wotan gives a deep-chested laugh, while Loge pretends to be seized with terror.

The serpent vanishes, and in its place Alberich reappears in his proper form. Do the wise ones believe him now? he asks. Loge, putting on a quaking voice, declares that his trembling sufficiently attests the truth of the demonstration. Alberich has certainly managed to transform himself into a big serpent; but can he also

turn himself into something correspondingly small, for surely, if danger should threaten, it would be an advantage to be small enough to creep anywhere into hiding?

The vainglorious Alberich laughs at Loge's incredulity. How small would Loge like him to make himself? "That the smallest crevice might hold thee where hides a toad in its fright," replies Loge. "Pah! Nothing simpler!" says Alberich, and once more donning the Tarnhelm and murmuring the spell he disappears, and the gods perceive a toad on the rocks, crawling towards them. "Quick! Seize it!" cries Loge. Wotan places his foot on the toad, while Loge takes it by the head and seizes the Tarnhelm. In a moment Alberich becomes visible in his own form, writhing under the foot of Wotan. Loge binds him hand and foot with a rope, and in spite of his violent struggles the gods drag him to the shaft by which they came down. There they disappear; the scene changes as before, but in the reverse direction. There is an orchestral interlude, made up of motives with which we are by now familiar, and after a time we see Wotan and Loge come up out of the shaft, dragging Alberich with them bound.

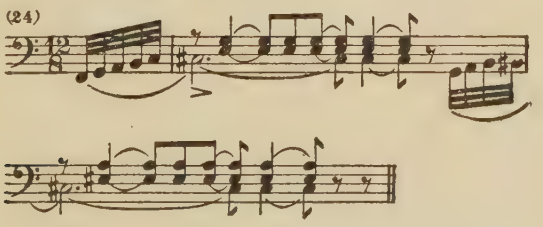
The next scene takes place on the mountain height, as in Scene II, though at present a pale mist hangs over the stage. Loge, bidding Alberich seat himself, dances round him, snaps his fingers at him, and asks him ironically which corner of all the world that belongs to him he will graciously grant to Loge for his stall. Alberich bursts out into bitter revilings of the gods and self-reproaches for his own credulous blindness; but their only reply is that they will set him free when ransom has been paid in the form of the hoard.

Alberich curses them once more, but mutters to himself that if only he can retain the Ring he will soon be able to gain as much wealth for himself as before, and the lesson will have been well worth what he has lost. He consents to give up the hoard, and Loge unties the rope from his right hand. Alberich puts the Ring to his lips, murmurs a secret command, and from the cleft the Nibelungs ascend, laden with treasure, which they pile up in a heap. Raging at the disgrace of thus appearing bound before his vassals, Alberich storms at them in the old way, and when their

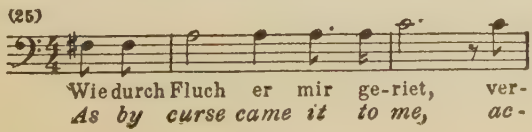
work has been done dismisses them with an imperious gesture. He kisses the Ring and stretches it out commandingly, and as the Nibelungs disperse in terror the orchestra lets loose a tornado of tone that is more eloquent of Alberich's fury than any mere speech could be.

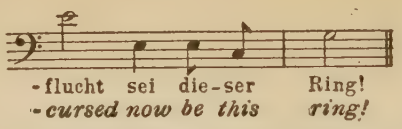
Now, he presumes, he can depart, and take his helm with him. Loge, however, throws the Tarnhelm also on the hoard, claiming it as part of the ransom. Once more Alberich reflects that he who made the first Tarnhelm for him can make him another and again he asks if he may now depart. But Wotan claims also the Ring on his finger. In vain the horrified gnome pleads that this shall be left to him; Wotan, adopting a high moral tone, reviles him for the theft by which he came into possession of the Rhinegold, and in spite of the protests of the frenzied Nibelung he seizes him and violently tears the Ring from his finger. Alberich gives a horrible shriek. Wotan, after contemplating the Ring, puts it on his own finger and says, " 'Tis mine now, the spell of might, that makes me lord of the world! " Loge, having untied the remainder of Alberich's bonds, orders him to " slip away home."

Alberich, insane with fury, raises himself and laughs wildly, while the orchestra gives out the syncopated theme that is henceforth to be associated with his resolve to bring about the Annihilation of the Gods:

(24)

Then comes the most significant moment of the drama as it has so far shaped itself. Alberich lays his curse upon the Ring:

(25)





" As it gave me measureless might, let each who holds it die, slain by its spell! To none on earth joy shall it give, in its radiant lustre shall none delight! Care shall consume its wretched possessor, and envy gnaw him who owneth it not! Each shall lust after its delights, yet none shall know pleasure who winneth it! To its lord no gain shall it bring, yet shall murder follow it close! His doom ever knowing, racked shall his soul be with fear: while life shall last, daily wasting away, the Ring's great lord to the Ring shall be a slave, till once more to my hand the ravished treasure returneth. So, moved by the direst need, the Nibelung blesseth his Ring! " He vanishes quickly in the cleft, while the orchestra thunders out the threatening Servitude motive (No. 21).

The thick vapour in the foreground gradually clears away, and from now onwards the stage slowly becomes lighter. Loge makes an ironical comment on the fury of the departed Alberich; Wotan, lost in contemplation of the Ring on his finger, dreaming of the power it is to confer on him, makes no reply. In the clearer foreground light the aspect of the gods regains its former freshness. In the background, however, the veil of mist still lingers, so that the castle in the distance remains for the present invisible.

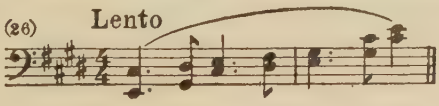
Donner, Froh, and Fricka enter, followed a little later by Fasolt and Fafner, leading Freia between them. Fricka runs joyfully to her sister and hails her with loving words, but Fasolt wards her off. A victim to the charm of Freia, he has been reluctant to bring her back; but the word of the giants had been given, and now they have come to claim the price of Freia. Wotan points to the hoard that is to be Freia's ransom. Fasolt, still grieving over the loss of Freia, stipulates that if he is to forget her beauty the treasure must be heaped so high that it will hide her loveliness completely from his sight.

Wotan consents to this, and Freia is placed by the giants in the middle of the stage. They thrust their staves into the ground on

each side of her, thus measuring her height and breadth, and Loge and Froh heap up the treasure between the poles. The covetous Fafner, peering closely into the mass, finds various crevices which he insists on being stopped. Wotan and Fricka are filled with shame at the spectacle, while Donner, as usual, would resort to violence; Wotan, however, restrains him. Fafner, surveying the hoard closely once more, protests that he is dazzled by the gleam of Freia's hair, and insists on the Tarnhelm being thrown on the heap. At a word from Wotan, Lodge lets the Tarnhelm go, and asks the giants if now they are contented.

But the lovelorn Fasolt, taking a last look at the fair one, catches a radiant glance from her eye, and declares that he cannot part from her. This last crevice too has to be filled up, and Fafner, catching sight of the Ring on Wotan's finger, insists on that being used for the purpose. After a wild protest, Wotan refuses, and the angry Fasolt pulls Freia out from behind the pile and is about to hurry away with her, but is restrained by Fafner.

Wotan, sore and angry, has turned aside, and the stage has again become dark. Now, from a rocky crevice at the side, a bluish light breaks forth, in which Erda, the goddess of the earth and wisdom, suddenly becomes visible, rising from the ground to half her height, and in the orchestra we hear the solemn Erda motive:



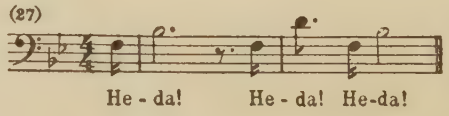
In grave accents Erda warns Wotan to give up the Ring and avoid the curse: "All that exists endeth! A day of gloom dawns for the gods; I charge thee, give up the Ring!" She sings down slowly and disappears, and the bluish light dies out. The troubled Wotan, anxious for further knowledge, tries to follow her into the cleft, but he is held back by Froh and Fricka.

Wotan now comes to a sudden resolution. Turning to the giants, and brandishing his spear in token of a bold decision, he throws the Ring on the hoard. The giants release Freia, who hastens joyfully to the gods, who caress her each in turn with the greatest

joy. Fafner meanwhile has spread out an enormous sack, into which he prepares to pack the hoard. Fasolt interrupts him, claiming measure for measure, but is roughly repulsed by Fafner, who reminds him that it was more on Freia than on the gold that his doting eyes were set, so that it is only right that Fafner should retain the greater part of the treasure for himself.

A violent quarrel breaks out between the clumsy pair, from which Wotan turns away in contempt and disgust. Loge whispers to Fasolt the advice to let his brother have what he will, but to make sure of the Ring. A struggle for the Ring ensues; Fasolt wrests it for a moment from Fafner, but his brother fells him to the ground with one blow and wrenches the Ring from the dying man's hand: " Now glut thee with Freia's glance," he says, " for the Ring see'st thou no more! " Fafner puts the Ring in the sack and callously goes on finishing his packing of the hoard, while the horror-struck gods watch him in silence. From the orchestra, in the loudest tones of the trombones, there rings out the Curse motive, and we realise that the malediction that Alberich has laid upon the Ring has already begun its work.

The shattered Wotan would descend to the earth to take counsel of Erda, but Fricka, caressing him, tries to turn his thoughts into more cheerful channels by pointing out to him the fort that awaits his occupation. The mists in the background lie like a load on Donner's brow. He ascends a high rock, swings his hammer, and the clouds gather round him more quickly; in time he disappears completely within them:



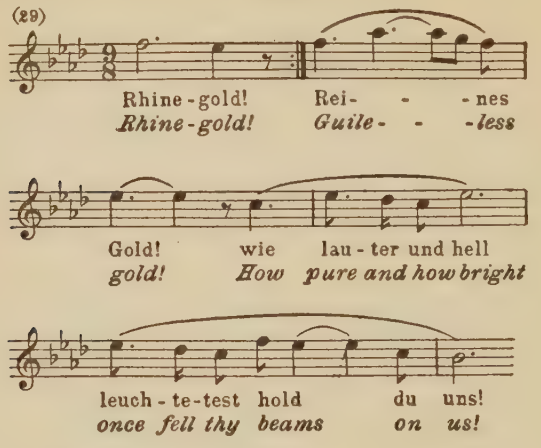
This marks the commencement of the episode often given in the concert room under the title of " The Entry of the Gods into Valhalla." After a time Donner's hammer-stroke is heard on the rock; a vivid flash of lightning shoots out of the cloud, followed by a tremendous clap of thunder; then the clouds suddenly dis-

perse, Donner and Froh become visible once more, and from their feet there stretches, across the valley to the castle, a rainbow bridge of blinding radiance; the castle itself gleams nobly in the rays of the setting sun. Meanwhile Fafner has left the stage, dragging after him the sack and Fasolt's body.

The gods are lost in admiration of the glorious spectacle now afforded by the rainbow bridge and the castle, and Wotan hails the fort in a magnificent apostrophe, giving it the name of Valhalla. As he speaks of the security that the fort will afford him a new motive, that of the Sword, peals out in the trumpet:

This motive, especially in connection with Siegmund and Siegfried, becomes of great importance in the later stages of *The Ring*. But as yet, of course, there has been no mention, and indeed no thought, of either the Sword or any of the persons to be associated with it, or of the means by which, through the Sword, the deliverance of the gods is ultimately to be worked. These considerations seem to have occurred to Wagner; and during one of *The Rhinegold* rehearsals at Bayreuth in 1876 he laid it down that a sword from the treasure-heap should be left on the stage by Fafner, and that Wotan should pick this up and point it solemnly towards the castle.

Fricka asks the meaning of the title of Valhalla given to the castle, and Wotan gives her the somewhat enigmatic answer, "What strength against my fears my spirit has found, when victory is mine, will make the meaning clear." Taking Fricka by the hand he walks slowly towards the bridge, followed by Froh, Freia, and Donner; Loge remains in the foreground and gazes after them, saying ominously, "They are hastening to their end, though they deem themselves strong and enduring." For his part, he will transform himself once more into flickering fire and go wandering over the earth, "rather than blindly end with the blind, even were they of gods the most godlike!" He carelessly saunters after

the gods, while from below, invisible in the depths of the valley, the three Rhinemaidens, in a ravishing trio:

(29)
Rhine-gold! Rei- - -nes
Rhine-gold! Guile- - -less
Gold! wie lau-ter und hell
gold! How pure and how bright
leuch-te-test hold du uns!
once fell thy beams on us!

lament the loss of the gold.

Loge gives them a derisive answer, and as the gods laugh and cross the rainbow bridge the trio breaks forth afresh: " Rhine-gold! Guileless gold! Oh would that again in the waters thy gleam might shine! Tender and true it is only in the waters: false and base are those who revel above! " From the orchestra surges up the noble Valhalla theme (No. 8), followed by one that has been associated with the rainbow; and while the gods are still crossing the bridge to the castle, the curtain falls.

It need hardly be said that this crossing of the valley by means of the rainbow bridge presents difficulties of staging that few theatres can overcome.

Wagner regarded *The Ring* as a musical drama not in four parts but in three, *The Rhinegold* being described by him as a " Fore-Evening." It resembles, indeed, in some ways the first or " exposition " section of a great symphony: the main motives, psychological and musical, are here set forth, to be worked out in detail in the later movements, blended, contrasted, and at last brought triumphantly to their logical conclusion.

THE VALKYRIE

AT the end of our analysis of *The Rhinegold* we saw the gods entering into Valhalla, greatly troubled. The Ring has passed out of the hands of Wotan into those of Fafner. The giant himself is too stupid to realise the terrible uses to which the Ring might be put; all his dull brain has been capable of, indeed, is to make him change himself, by means of the Tarnhelm, into a dragon, and in this form to retire into a cave where he slumbers upon his gold.

But the wily Alberich is always scheming and lying in wait, and Wotan knows that if the Ring falls again into his hands he will use it to destroy the gods. The problem for Wotan, then, is to get the Ring into his possession once more. But he sees now that he must do this neither by craft nor by violence, for he is the god of those treaties and that truth without which the world cannot hold together.

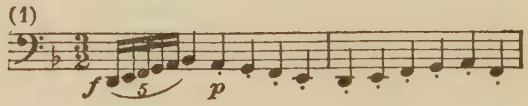
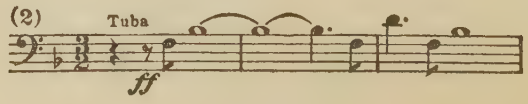
The present trouble has come upon the gods through his forgetfulness of the runes engraved upon his own spear, and his breach of faith with the giants, followed by his rape of the Ring, the gold, and the Tarnhelm from Alberich. If the Ring, then, is to be his once more, and so made harmless to the gods and the world, it must be by some means morally above reproach, and without any direct intervention on his part.

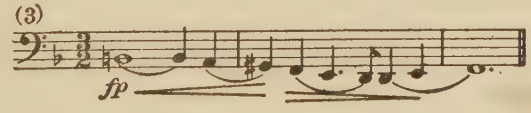
The plan he has thought out, in the interval between the *Rhinegold* and the *Valkyrie*, is to raise up a hero who shall be free of him, and yet, unconsciously, do his will.

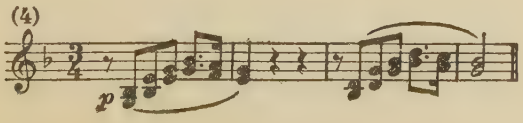
Since *The Rhinegold* closed, Wotan has had by Erda — the earth goddess of ancient wisdom, whose warning restrained him

from violent action at the end of the first evening of *The Ring* — nine daughters, the Valkyries whose function it is to bring to Valhalla the bodies of slain heroes, who, reanimated, will be a guard for the threatened gods. The chief of the Valkyries, and Wotan's favourite among them, is Brynhilde.

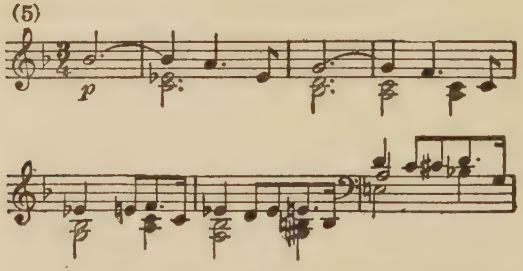
Moreover, " ranging and changing " as is his wont, as he tells Fricka and us in *The Rhinegold,* he has had an alliance with a mortal woman, from which has sprung the race of the Wälsungs (Volsungs). One of these children, Siegmund, Wotan hopes will prove to be the deliverer of the gods. With Siegmund and his sister Sieglinde he has lived in the woods as their father Wolfe. Some time before *The Valkyrie* opens the home has been raided by an enemy tribe, and Sieglinde carried off to be the wife of Hunding. Wolfe disappears, and Siegmund remains alone in the world, with seemingly everyone's hand against him. *The Valkyrie* opens at the point at which Siegmund, exhausted, is fleeing from the latest enemies who have assailed him. Chance has brought him to the hut of Hunding.

There is no formal overture, but only a short orchestral prelude depicting a storm. Against a continually reiterated D in the violins and violas the 'cellos and basses give out a motive:

suggestive of the steady pelting of heavy rain. The gloomy atmosphere is broken here and there by flashes of lightning (sharp, discordant chords in the wood-wind), while later the tuba thunders out the theme that, in *The Rhinegold,* we have seen to be associated with Donner as the god of the weather in general, and of bad weather and thunder in particular:

When the curtain rises we see a room that is built round the stem of a great ash tree which forms its centre. In the background is a wide entrance door. In the foreground, on the right, is the hearth, behind which is a store-room; on the left, towards the back, there are steps leading to an inner chamber. Also on the left, but more in the foreground, is a table, behind which is a broad bench, set into the wall; in front of this are some wooden stools.

After the curtain has risen, the stage remains empty for a few moments, and we hear the storm dying down outside. Then the door is opened from without, and Siegmund enters, evidently utterly exhausted; finding the room empty, he closes the door behind him, and with a last effort staggers towards the hearth, where he throws himself down on a bearskin rug, saying, " Whose hearth this may be, here must I rest me! " While this has been happening, the Storm motive has merged imperceptibly into one typical of Siegmund:

Sieglinde enters from the inner room on the left. Having heard the door open, she has thought it was her husband returning; her look changes to one of surprise when she sees a stranger stretched out on the hearth. He seems to be in a swoon. She comes nearer and contemplates him, and bends down to see if he is still breathing. Siegmund, suddenly raising his head, cries out for a draught of water, which Sieglinde brings him in a drinking-horn, the Siegmund motive being put through some exquisitely tender modulations as she does so. Mingled with the development of this motive is that of Sieglinde's Pity:



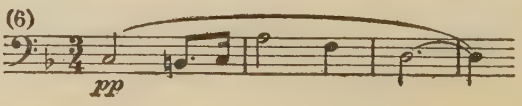
As Siegmund, having drunk, hands the horn back to Sieglinde, his gaze becomes fixed with growing interest on her face, and the orchestra, in an eloquent and moving theme given out by the 'cellos:



suggests that love has already forged its mysterious link in the heart of the pair. Siegmund asks who it is that has first assuaged his thirst and then gladdened his weary eyes, and Sieglinde tells him that she is the wife of one Hunding, in whose house he now is. He is their guest, she says, and must take his ease there till the master returns.

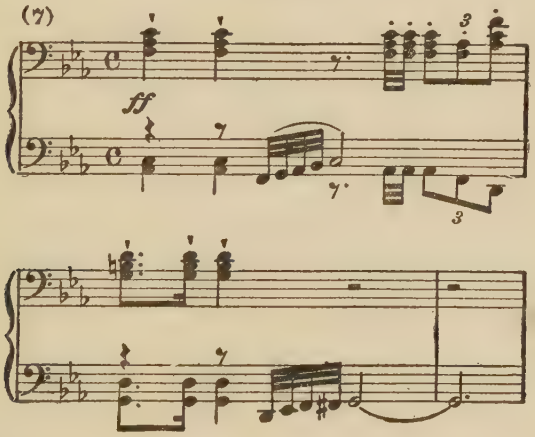
A weaponless and wounded man, Siegmund answers, should be safe; and he tells her how he has been hunted by his foemen and bruised by the tempest. To the gentle strains of the Pity motive in the strings Sieglinde goes to the store-room, whence she emerges with a horn filled with mead, which she offers to Siegmund. He begs her first to touch it with her lips, which she does; then he takes a long draught from it, his gaze all the time resting upon her with increasing ardour, while the orchestra discourses softly but warmly on the Love motive.

Now that he is refreshed, he tells her, he must fly, for wherever he goes, ill fate follows. She impulsively calls him back just as his hand has raised the latch: "Abide thou here," she says; "no ill fate canst thou bring there, where ill fate has made its home"; and the 'cellos intone the expressive motive of the Wälsung's Woe:



Looking searchingly into her eyes, which she lowers in sad confusion, he returns to the hearth. " ' Wehwalt ' [which we may render as ' Woeful '] named I myself; Hunding here will I await."

He stands by the hearth again, and the pair search out each other's souls with their eyes during a long silence, which is suddenly broken by a sound that makes Sieglinde start; it is Hunding outside, leading his horse to the stable. She runs to the door and opens it, and Hunding, a huge, sombre, sinister figure, armed with shield and spear, stalks in to the accompaniment of his representative motive — given out in dark and threatening tones by the tubas:



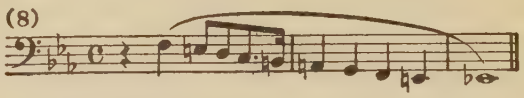
This motive is one of Wagner's greatest triumphs of characterization; in two or three bars the whole gloomy, loveless, overbearing nature of the man is painted.

Hunding turns to Sieglinde with a look of hard enquiry, and she explains how she found this exhausted man lying by the hearth, gave him cooling drinks, and treated him as a guest. The surly Hunding takes off his armour and gives it to Sieglinde, roughly bidding her prepare the evening meal. She hangs the arms on branches of the ash tree, and then, bringing food and drink from the store-room, prepares the table for supper. While she is doing this she cannot help her gaze straying to Siegmund, and

Hunding, who has been scanning the latter's features keenly, is struck by their resemblance to those of his wife.

Here the orchestra gives out the Treaty motive (associated with Wotan):

(8)



that we have already heard in *The Rhinegold.*

Hunding conceals his surprise, however, and turning to Siegmund with assumed unconcern asks him how he came thither. Siegmund cannot tell him; he has been driven by the storm and his enemies through field and forest, but he knows neither the way he came nor where he is now. He is in Hunding's house, the black giant tells him, and demands his guest's name. Sieglinde is now sitting next to Hunding and opposite to Siegmund, and during the latter's recital the eyes of the pair are almost constantly on each other, while Hunding observes them both critically.

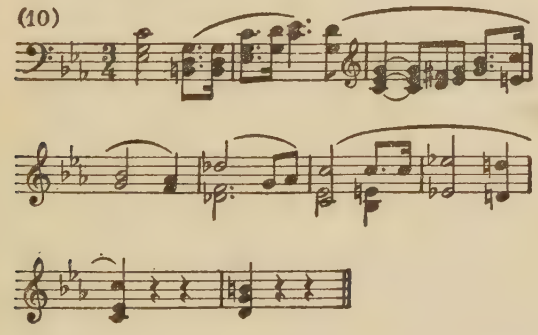
Siegmund tells Hunding that he is neither "Friedmund" (Peaceful) nor "Frohwalt" (Joyful), but "Wehwalt" (Woeful). His father was Wolfe, and with him there came into the world a twin-born sister, whom he has scarcely known. As a boy he went hunting and warring with his father, and one day when they returned from the hunt they found the wolf's nest laid waste; the stately hall was burnt to ashes, the mother lay dead, and not a trace of the sister was left; this was the work of the evil Neidings. Then for years he roamed the woods with his father, the twain for ever fighting.

One day the Neidings made a furious onslaught on them; Wolfe and the son scattered the foe like chaff, but the boy became separated from his father, whom he never saw again; all that remained of him was a wolf skin that Siegmund found in the forest. From the orchestra, that gives out in the softest tones the Valhalla motive that has already appeared in *The Rhinegold:*

(9)

we learn that this father was Wotan. In pathetic tones Siegmund goes on to tell of the loneliness of his life from that time and of his failure to find love or friendship anywhere; " whate'er I did, where'er I fared, if friend I sought or woman wooed, still was I held in suspicion. Ill fate lay on me. Whate'er to me seemed right, others reckoned it ill; what I held to be foul, others counted as fair. In feuds I fell where'er I dwelt, wrath ever against me I roused; sought I for gladness, found I but grief; so must I ' Woeful ' call me, for woe still walks in my wake."

In response to a question from Sieglinde he goes on to tell of his last affray — he had fought in defence of a maiden whom her kinsmen were trying to force into loveless wedlock; in the end he had been forced by numbers to fly, wounded and weaponless. As he ends his melancholy tale, turning on Sieglinde a look full of sorrowful ardour, the orchestra tells us who he is by giving out the long and expressive theme of the Wälsung race:

(10)

Hunding, rising gloomily, speaks darkly of a turbulent race that he knows, that is at deadly feud with his own; he had come too late to levy toll for his kinsmen's blood, but returning he finds his flying foeman in his own house. For that night Siegmund will have the immunity of a guest, but in the morning he must defend himself: " no longer life I allow; for murder toll will I take." Sieglinde steps anxiously between the two men, but Hunding harshly orders her away to prepare his night draught and then wait for him within.

For a considerable time after this not a word is spoken by any of the three actors. Sieglinde, after a moment's hesitation and reflection, turns slowly towards the store-room, where she again pauses, seemingly lost in thought. Then, with quiet resolution, she opens the cupboard, fills a drinking-horn and shakes some spices into it from a box. She turns again to Siegmund, whose eyes have never left her; but perceiving that Hunding is watching them, she moves towards the bed-chamber. On the steps she once more turns round, bends upon Siegmund a look full of longing, and with her eyes indicates, explicitly and urgently, a particular spot in the great ash tree that occupies the centre of the hall. Hunding, his anger rising at this significant interchange of glances, starts up and dismisses her with a violent gesture; and with a last look at Siegmund she goes into the inner room.

While she has been looking at the tree, the bass trumpet has given out softly a theme:

(11)

which we recognise as the Sword motive that has already been heard in the final scene of *The Rhinegold*. The harsh, threatening Hunding theme (No. 7) is heard again as Hunding, taking his weapons down from the tree, takes leave of Siegmund with a final threat for the morrow. He goes into the inner chamber, and from within the bolt is heard to shoot.

Siegmund is left alone. It has become quite dark by now, the room being lit only by a faint gleam from the hearth. Siegmund sinks on to the couch by the fire and broods in sad silence, with the Hunding motive pounding threateningly through his tortured brain; sometimes it is heard as a sinister rhythm alone, in the kettledrums, sometimes clothed in the gloomy colours of the horns and brass.

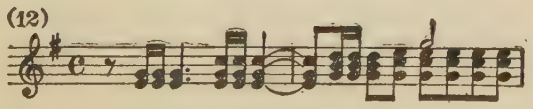
Once more the bass trumpet gives out softly the Sword motive,

as Siegmund bitterly and despairingly recalls how his father once promised him that in his direst need he should find a sword. Here, surely, is the need; he is in a foeman's house, weaponless, held as a hostage awaiting vengeance! He has seen a woman, winsome and pure, whose soft enchantment has kindled a flame within him; but she is held in thrall by the very man who now mocks his weaponless foe. "Wälse!" he cries in anguish to his father, "Wälse! Where is thy sword — the trusty sword that in strife shall serve me, when there shall burst from my breast the rage that consumes my soul?" As he speaks, the expiring fire falls together, and from the glow that arises from it a light suddenly strikes on the spot of the tree stem that Sieglinde had indicated by her glance, and in which the hilt of a buried sword is now visible. The Sword motive keeps flashing out in the orchestra.

For the moment Siegmund does not grasp the significance of what he has seen. His thoughts are still running on Sieglinde, and he wonders if this lingering radiance that he sees can be the parting look the lovely woman gave him, that has remained clinging to the tree. The fire on the hearth dies down once more as he muses, and at last it is extinguished entirely; in the complete darkness the door at the side opens softly, and Sieglinde, in a white garment, comes out, moving lightly but rapidly to the hearth. "Sleepst thou, guest?" she asks softly, and Siegmund springs up in joyful surprise.

Hurriedly and with an air of secrecy she tells him that she has mixed a drug with Hunding's night draught, so that the guest may escape. She will show him a weapon, if he can make it his own; then would she indeed name him the noblest of heroes, for by the strongest alone can the weapon be won; and the orchestra gives us a hint of a Cry of Victory that will become of importance later:

(12)



Sieglinde proceeds to tell him the story of the weapon. At the wedding with Hunding into which she was forced, his kinsmen

were all feasting in this very hall, and she was sitting alone in sadness while they were drinking, when a stranger strode in — an old man garbed in grey, with his hat so low on his brow that one of his eyes was hidden, though the flash of the other struck fear into all who saw it. She alone, of all there, felt something sweet and solacing, sad and yearning, in that glance.

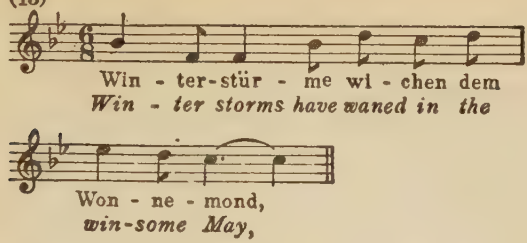
In the old man's hand was a sword; this he swung and then struck deep into the stem of the ash tree, burying the blade up to the haft. (The Valhalla motive in the orchestra tells us who the visitor was, while the Sword motive rings out in the trumpet as Sieglinde describes the burying of the weapon in the tree.) The sword should be his who had strength to draw it forth. But none could do this, labour as mightily as they would; there, in silence, still bides the inviolate sword. Once more the Valhalla theme is softly intoned by the orchestra as Sieglinde says that then she knew who he was who had greeted her in her grief, and now she knows, too, who is he for whom the weapon waits.

The tempo quickens, the Sword motive peals out once more in the trumpet, and over the Victory theme (No. 12) Sieglinde pours out the passionate story of her trouble and of her longing for the coming of the one who should deliver her. Embracing her ardently, Siegmund tells her that he who now holds her is the friend who shall win both weapon and wife. For he, like her, has suffered shame and sorrow, spite and dishonour; and now for him as for her is to come the joy of vengeance.

As the passion of the music soars to its climax the great door in the background, opening upon the forest, suddenly flies open. Sieglinde starts back in alarm and tears herself away from Siegmund with a cry of "Ha! Who passed? Who entered here?" The door remains open. It is a glorious spring night, and the full moon, shining in, enables the pair to see each other now with the utmost clearness. In gentle ecstasy Siegmund answers her, "No one passed, but one has come: see now how Spring smiles in the hall!"

Into the music, as into the room, has come the gentle radiance of the moon and the soft pulsation of spring. Siegmund, with tender force, draws Sieglinde towards him on the couch, where she sits beside him; then he breaks into a song of Love and Spring:

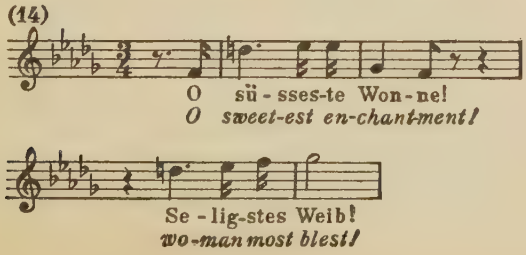
(13)



in which he describes Spring wandering through wood and meadow, gladdening everything with his laughing eye, rousing everything to life with his breath. The seasonal miracle of nature is symbolical of what has happened to them; and the Love motive (No. 5) comes into its splendid own as Siegmund describes to Sieglinde how the brother has been led here to free his sister and bride, now made one with him by Love and Spring.

It is to the strain of the Love motive again that Sieglinde cries in reply, " Thou art the Spring, that long I have sighed for through winter's ice-bound days. My heart greeted thee with the holiest fear when thy look at first on me lightened. All things seemed strange to me, friendless all was around me; like things I never had known, all that ever came near. But thy soul lay bare at once to me; when my eyes fell on thee, knew I mine own one: what lay hid in my heart, what I am, clear as the day dawned on my sight, in resonant tones rang in my ear, when in winter's dreary desert there came first my friend to me." She hangs in ecstasy on his neck and gazes closely into his face. The orchestra sweeps up in a great wave, that at its crest breaks into a new motive — that of Felicity:

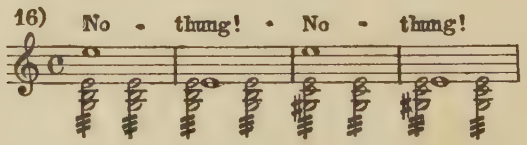
(14)



An old, submerged memory stirs dimly at the back of Sieglinde's mind, and by the employment of the Valhalla motive in the orchestra Wagner lets us see what is hidden as yet from her — that what first drew her to Siegmund was the community of their blood. Sieglinde has seen her own image in the stream, and now she sees it again in Siegmund; in his voice she recognises the echo of her own voice given back to her by the wood; in his eye she sees the gleam that the grey guest of old turned on her when he soothed her sorrowing soul at the wedding feast.

No longer, she says, shall he be " Woeful " ; " Joyful " she will call him now. Was Wolfe indeed his father? she asks him. A wolf indeed he was to fearful foxes, Siegmund replies gaily, but his name was Wälse. Beside herself with ecstasy, Sieglinde names this Wälsung, for whom their father Wälse struck the sword in the stem, " Siegmund! " Joyously accepting the name, Siegmund springs towards the ash tree, seizes the hilt of the sword, and, to a strain that has already appeared in *The Rhinegold,* where he knew it as the Renunciation motive:

cries " Holiest Love's most mighty need, passionate longing's feverish need, brightly burns in my breast, drives to deeds and death! " " Nothung! " (Needful) he now names the sword:



" Needful! Needful! So name I thee, sword: Needful, masterful steel! Show me thy sharpness, bare me thy teeth; leap forth from thy scabbard to me! " With a mighty effort he plucks the sword from the tree and shows it to the wondering and enraptured

Sieglinde; it is the bride-gift of Siegmund the Wälsung to the bride with whom he flies from the foeman's house, "forth to the laughing house of Spring."

Sieglinde, whom he has taken in his arms, tears herself away from him in mad intoxication, and cries, "Art thou Siegmund standing before me? Sieglinde am I, who for thee longed: thine own true sister thou winnest at once with the sword!" She falls on his breast with a cry, and the curtain falls to the accompaniment of a tumultuous outburst of passion in the orchestra, in which the Sword motive is prominent.

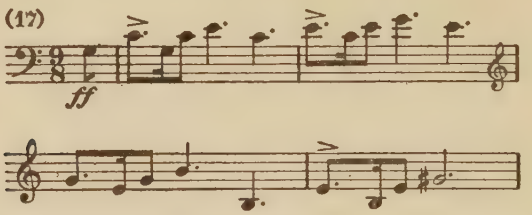
It was a curious habit with Wagner, once he had symbolised something or other in a leading motive, to use that motive again to represent something that had no more than a merely verbal connection with the thing originally symbolised.

In *Parsifal*, for example, when the wounded swan comes upon the scene, Wagner uses the Swan theme from *Lohengrin*. There can be no suggestion, of course, that the two swans were the same bird; the explanation is that having settled in 1846 upon a theme to represent a particular swan, Wagner, more than thirty years later, utilised it as descriptive, more or less, of swans in general.

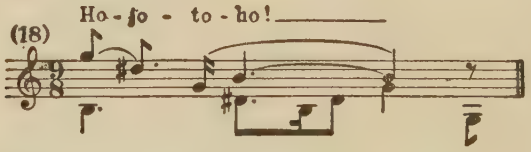
We have another instance of the same curious habit of mind in the orchestral prelude to the second act of *The Valkyrie*. This is a magnificently fiery piece of music, mainly descriptive of the flight of Siegmund and Sieglinde from the house of Hunding. In the first couple of bars we have a harmonically modified version of the Sword theme; this recurs again and again in the course of the prelude.

If the reader will now turn back to our analysis of *The Rhinegold*, and look at quotation No. 14 (the motive of Freia), he will see, in the second and third bars, a phrase that, in the earlier opera, is always associated with Freia's flight, or attempts at flight, from the giants. In this prelude to the second act of *The Valkyrie*, Wagner, having once more a flight to describe, reverts to this figure, which he works out symphonically. People who have become used to associating the theme with Freia in *The Rhinegold* are inclined to wonder what it is doing here, for of course Freia has nothing to do

with *The Valkyrie*. The explanation is that curiously literal bent of Wagner's mind to which reference has just been made.

Towards the end of the prelude a new and striking theme tears its way upward in the bass trumpet and trombone:

This is the theme of the wild Valkyries.

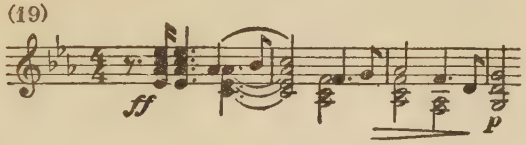
The curtain having risen, we see a wild, rocky pass. In the background is a gorge running from below to a high ridge of rocks, from which the ground falls gradually again to the foreground. We see Wotan in warlike array, grasping his spear; before him stands Byrnhilde, in the garb of a Valkyrie, also fully armed. Hunding is naturally in pursuit of Siegmund and Sieglinde, and in the impending fight Wotan intends to take Siegmund's side. He has summoned Byrnhilde to dispatch her for this purpose to the scene of the fight. Springing from rock to rock on the heights, Byrnhilde utters the half-savage cry that is characteristic of the Valkyries:



Brynhilde is in a merry mood. Looking down from a high peak into the gorge at the back she has seen Fricka approaching in her ram-drawn chariot. Fricka is evidently in a temper, and Brynhilde knows that this bodes a storm for Wotan. So Brynhilde will leave him, she says; in the fights of heroes she revels, but from strife like this she holds herself aloof; and reiterating her savage Valkyrie cry she disappears behind the mountain at the side just as Fricka

comes upon the scene. The latter dismounts and advances impetuously towards Wotan, while the orchestra gives out for the first time the vigorous and pointed theme of Fricka's Wrath:

(19)



The scene of recrimination that ensues between Wotan and Fricka is probably a faint reflection of similar scenes between Wagner and Minna after the love had died out from their union.

In a long letter of the 26th January, 1854, to his friend August Roeckel, in which he expounds the whole philosophy of *The Ring*, Wagner explains the situation as between Wotan and Fricka in terms that could be applied without alteration of a single word to the situation between Minna and himself: "The necessity of prolonging beyond the point of change the subjection to the tie that binds them — a tie resulting from an involuntary illusion of love — the duty of maintaining at all costs the relations into which they have entered, and so placing themselves in hopeless opposition to the universal law of change and renewal, which governs the world of phenomena, these are the conditions which bring the pair of them to a state of torment and mutual lovelessness."

People have come to regard Fricka as merely a rather tiresome termagant, who inflicts a long curtain lecture on her husband in the hearing of the audience. That is a complete misconception of her; and it may safely be said that wherever the spectator receives that impression the fault lies with the interpreter. When the part is played by an actress of intelligence who can rise to the full height of it, Fricka becomes a dignified and worthy figure, who commands our sympathies at least as much as Wotan himself.

Wagner was far too great an artist to make the elementary mistake of photographing slavishly from the life; and however much of Minna he may originally have intended to put into Fricka, when his incomparable dramatic imagination began to work upon the

latter character he lifted it to an intellectual height to which poor Minna could never have attained.

Standing with quiet dignity before Wotan, Fricka tells him her reasons for seeking him out, in spite of his efforts to avoid her; Hunding has appealed to her, as the protectress of the marriage bond, for justice to be done upon the " infamous pair " who have wronged him. Wotan tries to evade the point: what wrong, he asks mildly, has been done by this pair, " whom Spring in love did unite? " For his part he deems that oath unholy " that binds lives without love."

Fricka roughly brushes this familiar sophistry aside; he knows well, she says, that not only have Siegmund and Sieglinde betrayed Hunding, but they are brother and sister. A suggestion from Wotan that in spite of everything she should bless the union of the pair rouses her full indignation. She pours out a torrent of biting reproach upon him. Since he begat the Wälsungs he has neglected his own noble kindred, and especially his wife; moreover he is always flying to the fray with the savage Valkyrie maidens whom he has begotten. Lately he has been wandering wolflike through the woods as Wälse; and now, crowning disgrace and insult of all, he would throw his very wife at the foot of these wolf-whelps! As she pours out her passionate indictment the Wrath motive also works itself up into a fury in the orchestra.

Wotan, who so far has preserved a certain tranquillity, tries to reason with her. She goes too much by custom, he tells her; she will not admit even the necessity of finding a new rule to meet a new case. He lays before her the situation of himself and the gods in general. For their salvation they need a man who, not being sheltered by the gods, is not bound by the law of the gods; only such a man is meet for the deed which, though the need of the gods demands that it shall be done, a god himself may not work. To Fricka this seems merely sophistical; what deed could a hero do that could not be done by the gods to whose grace alone the hero would owe his power?

Fricka knows her husband, and sees in this sophistry only one

of his usual attempts to gain his end by guile. Of one thing she is certain — that this Wälsung who has betrayed Hunding and wedded his own sister shall not escape her. In vain Wotan pleads with her that Siegmund owes nothing to him — that he won the sword himself in his need. " And who but thou," counters Fricka, " made him the need and gave him the sword? "

Was it not for him, and for him alone, that the god had struck the sword in the tree stem? Was it not by Wotan's roundabout craft that Siegmund was lured to the hall where it would be found? Wotan becomes more and more dejected as Fricka proceeds with her indictment, and recognising his embarrassment she presses her point still more urgently; with Wotan, the god, she might wage war, but this Siegmund, she says with superb contempt, she will punish merely as a slave.

An impulse of revolt surges up in Wotan, but recognising his moral impotence, he asks her gloomily what is her will with him. She exacts from him a promise that he will not shield Siegmund in the fight with the avenger; then, quickly reading what is obviously at the back of his mind, she insists also that the Wälsung shall not be helped by Brynhilde. Writhing helplessly in her coils, the unhappy Wotan mutters that the Valkyrie shall be free to act as she chooses. But Fricka will have none of this; Brynhilde has no will but that of her father Wotan, and Fricka demands that he shall forbid her to act for Siegmund. " I cannot forsake him," cries Wotan in his grief; " he found my sword! " " Then withdraw its magic," replies Fricka; " let the blade break, and send him to fight without a guard."

Just then Brynhilde's cry is heard again from the heights, and Wotan has to admit that he had sent her to prepare to ride to Siegmund. She appears with her horse on the rocky path to the right, but catching sight of Fricka she suddenly breaks off her Valkyrie cry, and slowly and silently leads her horse down the rocky path and leaves it in a cave. In the few moments that Brynhilde is away, Fricka addresses a last dignified appeal to Wotan to do, and to order Brynhilde to do, what is demanded by the honour of the gods if the moral rule of the gods is to continue in the

world. For Fricka's honour Siegmund must fall: does Wotan confirm that by oath?

Throwing himself on to a rocky seat in the profoundest dejection, Wotan mutters brokenly, " Take my oath! " Then comes a moment that, in the hands of two actresses of the requisite calibre, is one of the most dramatic and breath-catching in the whole of *The Ring*. Striding towards the back, Fricka meets Brynhilde, and the two unfriendly women pause and regard each other for a moment in fateful silence. Then, in quiet, dignified tones, Fricka says to Brynhilde, " Wotan doth wait for thee: let him inform thee how the lot is to fall." She drives quickly away. Brynhilde, surprised, runs anxiously to Wotan, who is lost in gloomy brooding, and from the trombones we hear, quietly but suggestively, the motive of the Curse, which is followed by the significant motive of Wotan's Dejection:

(20)

This motive plays a great part in the scene that follows.

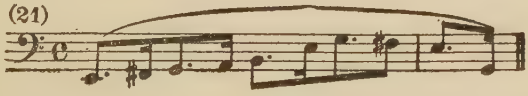
Byrnhilde anxiously asks what is amiss with her father. Wotan breaks into a terrible cry of grief and rage: this is the end of the gods, he says, and he himself is the saddest of all living things. Throwing from her her shield, spear, and helmet, Brynhilde sinks at his feet, and laying her head and hand confidingly on his knee and breast, she implores him to tell his beloved child the cause of his grief. He can confide in her, she says, for what is she but his own will incarnate?

Wotan has been sunk in deep thought: coming to himself out of this, and saying, very softly, " What secret I hold from all others still will remain unspoken for ever; myself I speak to, speaking to thee," he proceeds to tell her all the events of the story with which she is unfamiliar, but which have mostly been made known to us through *The Rhinegold* — how, when love had died out within him, he thirsted for power, and, lured craftily on by Loge, used fraud and deceit to consolidate that power; how Alberich, by

forswearing love, won the gold and wrought the Ring; how Wotan in turn wrested the gold from him, meaning to pay the giants with it for the building of Valhalla; how Erda warned him of the ill fate that lay in wait for him if he kept the Ring; how, tortured by the desire to know more of this misfortune that threatened him and the gods, he went into the womb of earth, subdued Erda to his love, mastered her wisdom and pride and so at last won speech from her, and how she bore him " the world's wisest of women," Brynhilde, together with eight sisters; how, unceasingly oppressed by the thought that the gods might come to a shameful end, wrought by those whom they had kept in bondage by craft and deception, he had made his Valkyrie daughters fill Valhalla with a host of guardian heroes; how there never dies out from his mind the fear that Alberich will regain the Ring and use its power to destroy the gods; and how, though the Ring could easily be torn from the dull-brained Fafner, Wotan may not attack him, for the honour of his treaty forbids. He, the god of treaties, he cries bitterly, to his own treaty is now a slave!

Only in one way and by one man can the gods be saved — by one who will do what Wotan himself may not do, a hero unhelped by him, who shall do Wotan's will unknowing, wholly through his own need. In the orchestra the 'cellos give out softly the motive of the Need of the Gods:

(21)



But where, the distracted god cries in his anguish, is this deliverer to be found?

" But the Wälsung, Siegmund," Brynhilde interjects, " does not he work for himself? " Sadly Wotan has to admit that he has always been behind Siegmund, and that Fricka has fathomed the fraud. And now he must abandon Siegmund, betray his trusted one and let him go down to his death!

In the madness of his grief he invokes ruin upon the godhead; for one thing only does he now long — the end, the end! And for

the destruction of the gods Alberich is always working and scheming; did not Erda warn Wotan that when Alberich, the dark foe of love, should get him a son, the end of the gods would be near? He has heard of late that by means of gold Alberich has won the love of a mortal woman, and that " grim envy's son now stirs in her womb." Truly Alberich is more fortunate than he: " this wonder befell to him, the loveless; yet of my love so boundless the free one was born not to me! " Wotan, in bitter wrath, gives Alberich his blessing, and with it the whole garish pomp of the gods with which to sate his envy.

What would he of Brynhilde? she asks him. Wotan tells her that she must fight for Fricka, the offended guardian of the marriage vow. Brynhilde, knowing how he loves Siegmund, impetuously declares that never will she fight against him, even at her father's bidding; but the god turns on her in towering anger and crushes her presumption. With a final cry of " Take heed my bidding to do! Siegmund dieth! This be the Valkyrie's work! " he strides away and disappears among the rocks.

The music of this long scene has been mainly made up of the most magical compounding and interplay of the various motives with which the reader is already familiar.

Left alone, Brynhilde stands for a while bewildered and terrified. Then, bending down sadly, she takes up her weapons and dons them again, but finds them heavier than before. Her heart is full of sorrow at the thought of having to abandon Siegmund, whom she loves almost as much as Wotan does. But the god's will must be obeyed, and slowly and mournfully she leaves the stage for the scene of the coming combat. When she arrives at the summit of the mountain she looks down into the gorge, and the Flight motive in the orchestra makes us aware that she sees Siegmund and Sieglinde approaching. After watching them for a moment she goes into the cave, disappearing from the view of the audience.

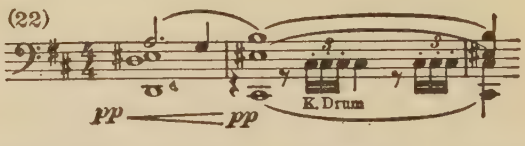
The Flight motive rises to greater and greater urgency in the orchestra, and at last Siegmund and Sieglinde, the latter sorely agitated and distressed, appear on the summit of the mountain.

Siegmund would have her rest awhile; but the terrified Sieglinde at first will hardly listen to him. Lovingly and gently he pleads with her; she is fleeing now not from Hunding only but from Siegmund himself, for though she loves him, her conscience has risen to accuse her, and she regards herself as unholy and accursed. He has brought her imperceptibly to the stone seat on which Wotan formerly sat. She throws her arms round his neck and remains thus for a moment, then starts up again in sudden terror and, heaping reproaches on herself, implores him to leave her in her shame. For whatever shame she has known, Siegmund replies, the miscreant to whom she had been bound against her will shall pay. Let her wait here; Siegmund will seek out Hunding, and " when Needful at his heart shall gnaw, vengeance then wilt thou have won! "

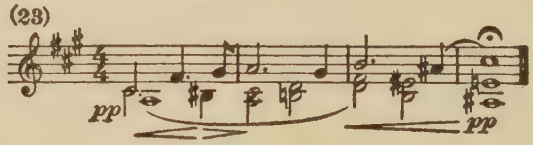
He is interrupted by a hoarse horn-call, afar off, punctuated by the typical Hunding rhythm (No. 7), and Sieglinde starts up again and listens in terror; it is Hunding hot on the hunt after them with his kinsmen and hounds. She stares before her as if demented with fear, and a succession of crashing discords in the trumpets and horns hints to us that her mind is cracking under the strain. Suddenly she melts in weakness and throws herself sobbing on Siegmund's breast, then starts up again in horror as she hears the savage baying of the hounds and the grim summons of Hunding's horn; in imagination she sees the hounds flinging themselves upon Siegmund and tearing him asunder, while his sword is broken into splinters and the ash tree is split and crashes to the ground. She collapses faintly into the arms of Siegmund, who lets her sink down with him, so that when he frees himself her head is resting on his lap. In this position he remains through the whole of the scene that immediately follows.

There is a long silence, during which Siegmund bends over her tenderly and presses a long kiss upon her brow, while the orchestra gives out a soft and infinitely sweet reminiscence of the Love theme (No. 5). Brynhilde, leading her horse by the bridle, comes out of the cave and advances slowly and solemnly. She pauses to contemplate the couple from a distance, then, again advancing

and again pausing, at last stands near to Siegmund and gazes long and earnestly at him, one hand resting on the neck of her horse, the other carrying her shield and spear. The brass give out the solemn theme of the Annunciation of Death:

(22)

the kettledrum figure in which is presumably a reminiscence of a figure in the Valhalla theme. To this motive succeeds, in the trumpet and trombones, one of the most moving of all Wagner's thematic inventions, the Death motive:

(23)



Upon this there follows a soft intonation of the Valhalla motive, which at the end unexpectedly shifts over to the minor, leading to a magical effect when Brynhilde strikes in with the solemn admonition, " Siegmund! Look on me! I come to call thee hence! "

This whole scene is one of the most searching expressions of Wagner's genius, both musical and dramatic.

Siegmund asks who is this beauteous and fair visitor and what she has to say to him. Gravely she tells him that it is only to men fated to die that she appears; who once has seen her face must go forth from the light of life, and him whom she greets she chooses for her own — most of this to the accompaniment of the Valhalla motive, indicating where the soul of the slain warrior is to be taken.

And when the hero is hers, Siegmund asks, whither does she lead him? To Wotan and Valhalla, she replies; there, as well as Wotan, he will find a host of fallen heroes, who will give him greetings of love; there too he will find his father Wälse. And will a woman give him fond greeting there? Siegmund asks. Wish-maidens will

wait on him there, is Brynhilde's answer, and Wotan's daughter herself will hand him the draught. For Wotan's child Siegmund now recognises this grave and holy messenger, and one thing more he would ask of her: will the bride and sister attend the brother to Valhalla? Shall Siegmund there hold Sieglinde in his arms? Gravely and sorrowfully Brynhilde tells him that his bride must remain on earth awhile yet; Siegmund will not see Sieglinde there!

Siegmund at once bends over Sieglinde, and, to the strain of the Love theme (No. 5) in the orchestra, kisses her softly on the brow; then, turning tranquilly to Brynhilde, he bids her greet for him Valhalla and Wotan and Wälse and all the heroes and the gracious wish-maidens; but as for him, he will follow her not! In the orchestra, by means of a quiet reiteration of the Annunciation motive (No. 22), we realise the inexorability of his fate; and to the strain of the Death motive Brynhilde reminds him that having looked upon the Valkyrie's face, with her he must now fare. He is strong and brave, she knows, and while life is in him he dreads nothing; " but death, thou vain one, prevails, and death to foretell thee came I here."

" By the hand of what hero shall I fall? " he asks. Being told that it is Hunding, he pours scorn on the idea. Sadly shaking her head, Brynhilde tells him that all is in vain. Siegmund, showing her the sword, given him by one who has care of him, makes light of her threat; but, a note of rigid insistence coming into her voice, she informs him that he who gave the sword now withdraws its virtue, and himself sends Siegmund to death.

Upon this, Siegmund breaks out into a passionate lamentation over his betrayal. If he must be parted from Sieglinde, he cries, he cares nothing for the glories of Valhalla; rather would he go to dwell with Hella! Brynhilde is touched by the completeness of this love, and, disregarding his reproaches and insults, she implores him to leave Sieglinde in her charge, for the sake of the child she is to bear. But Siegmund will not listen to her. Raising the sword he makes to slay Sieglinde, crying, " This sword, that a traitor to true man did give, this sword, that now before the foe plays me false; served it not then against the foe, it truly shall serve against

a friend! Two lives now laugh to thee here: take them, Needful, envious steel! Take them with one sure stroke! "

This decides Brynhilde. In an uncontrollable outburst of sympathy she cries to him that Sieglinde shall live and not be parted from Siegmund, for the Valkyrie will shield him in the fight. The sinister horn-calls are heard again in the distance, and she bids him hasten to the battlefield. She herself rushes away with her horse, and Siegmund looks after her with joy and relief.

The stage has gradually been growing darker; heavy thunderclouds have descended upon the background, and these gradually envelop the rocks, the gorge, and the mountains. Siegmund bends over the sleeping Sieglinde and speaks softly and lovingly to her; then, laying her gently on the rocks, he kisses her brow in farewell, and hearing Hunding's horn-call once more, starts up resolutely, draws his sword, and hastens to the mountain-top, where he disappears in the thunderclouds, that are broken for a moment by a flash of lightning.

When he has gone, Sieglinde begins to move restlessly in her dreams; she believes herself to be back again in her childhood's home, with her father and her brother roaming in the woods; cruel strangers descend upon the house, that goes up in flames. She gives a cry of " Siegmund! Siegmund! " and breaks out into her old terror as Hunding's horn-call is heard again, this time quite close. From the mountain pass at the back, Hunding's voice is heard hoarsely calling upon Woeful to face him in the fight, and Siegmund's voice, from farther away in the gorge, hurling back defiance.

For a moment a flash of lightning illumines the pass, and Sieglinde sees Hunding and Siegmund in combat. She rushes towards the pass, but is dazzled by another flash of lightning, and reels to one side as if blinded. In the glare of the light, Brynhilde is seen soaring over Siegmund and defending him with her shield. But just as Siegmund aims a deadly blow at Hunding, a red light breaks through the clouds from the left, and Wotan is seen standing over Hunding and holding out his spear in front of Siegmund. He orders Siegmund to stand back from his spear, upon which the

Wälsung's sword splinters, whereupon Hunding thrusts his spear into the breast of the unarmed man. Siegmund falls to the ground dead, and Sieglinde, who has heard his death-sigh, sinks down with a cry.

The fierce light has now died out from the mountain-top, and through the semi-darkness Brynhilde is dimly seen running to Sieglinde; she lifts her quickly on to her horse, and immediately disappears with her. The clouds above dividing, Hunding becomes visible, withdrawing his spear from the breast of the prostrate Siegmund; behind him, on a rock, leaning sombrely on his spear and surrounded by clouds, stands Wotan. In cold, devastatingly disdainful tones the god addresses Hunding: " Get hence, slave! Kneel before Fricka: tell her that Wotan's spear avenged what wrought her shame. . . . Go! . . . Go! " A contemptuous wave from the god's hand, and Hunding clatters dead to the ground. Then wrath against the disobedient Brynhilde surges up in Wotan's breast. " Woe to the guilty one! " he cries; " harshly will I punish her crime, if my steed be swift as her flight! " He disappears among thunder and lightning, and the curtain falls to a fortissimo enunciation, in the trombones, of the theme of the Need of the Gods (No. 21).

The third act opens with the magnificent scene descriptive of the Ride of the Valkyries. There is a short orchestral prelude before the curtain rises, based on the Ride motive (No. 17), accompanied by realistic spurts in the violins and whinnyings in the wood-wind.

The scene is the summit of a rocky mountain, with a pine wood on the right, and on the left the entrance to a cave, above which the rock rises to its highest point. The rocks at the back form the verge of a precipice. Storm-clouds fly swiftly past the mountain-peak. Four of the Valkyries, Gerhilde, Ortlinde, Waltraute, and Schwertleite, all in full armour, are assembled on the rocky point above the cave. The other Valkyries are as yet not in sight, though they are within hailing distance of the four on the rock. A flash of lightning pierces the clouds, and a Valkyrie on horseback becomes visible, a slain warrior hanging across her saddle. Other Valkyries, carrying a similar grim burden, appear from time to

time, and the wild maidens keep calling excitedly to each other, those in the distance using speaking-trumpets in the first place.

In time the four other Valkyries — Helmwige, Siegrune, Grimgerde, and Rossweisse — arrive, and all now await Brynhilde, who, they know, has been sent by their father to Siegmund the Wälsung. At last they perceive Brynhilde in the distance, pounding towards them in furious haste, and, to their astonishment, leaving her winded and staggering horse, Grane, in the wood. Something hangs from the saddle, but it is not a man.

From the excited ejaculations of the Valkyries we learn that Brynhilde takes no notice of their greeting; Grane has sunk to the earth exhausted, and Brynhilde, leaping from the saddle, has lifted the woman she has been carrying there.

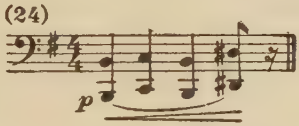
At length Brynhilde enters, supporting and leading Sieglinde. Breathlessly she explains to her sisters that for the first time she is not pursuing but pursued: "War-father [Wotan] hunts me close!" All give an exclamation of terror, while Brynhilde anxiously begs them to look northward from the mountain height, to see if War-father be nearing. They see a thunderstorm approaching from the north, that portends the coming of Wotan.

Hurriedly Brynhilde explains to her sisters that the woman with her is Sieglinde, and that Wotan's fury is aroused against not only the Wälsung but against Brynhilde herself for disobeying his commands. She implores them to lend her their swiftest steed that she may bear the woman away from Wotan's wrath; but the others are unwilling to bring their father's anger down upon themselves. Sieglinde breaks in upon the excited conversation with a quiet appeal to Brynhilde to have no further thought of her: it would have been better had she died with Siegmund, but there is still a way out; if Brynhilde would not have her curse her, let her strike her own sword through Sieglinde's heart. But Brynhilde begs her still to live "for love's fulfilment: rescue the pledge he has left of his love; a Wälsung bearest thou to him!"

Sieglinde starts violently, then her face lights up suddenly with an exalted joy, and she implores Brynhilde and the others to rescue her and her babe.

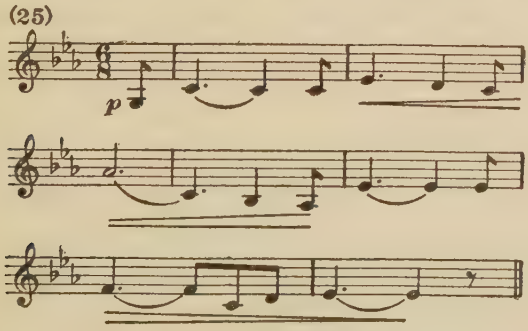
The thunderclouds at the back become darker, and the thunder draws nearer. The other Valkyries dare not help; but in response to another appeal from Sieglinde, Brynhilde bids her fly swiftly into the forest, while she will remain and await Wotan's vengeance. Which of the sisters, asks Brynhilde, came from the east? Siegrune replies that eastward is a wood, and there, in a cavern, Fafner, changed into a dragon, guards Alberich's ring. Mention of the dragon is accompanied by the slow-moving Dragon motive in the deeper and darker colours of the orchestra:

(24)



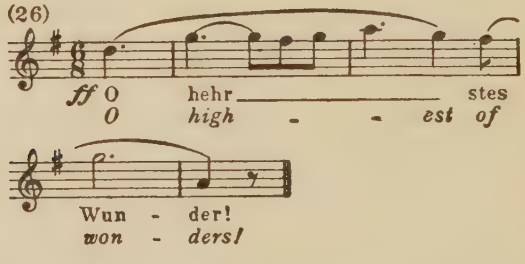
No place is that wood, Grimgerde thinks, for a helpless woman; but Brynhilde answers that Sieglinde will be safer there than anywhere, for Wotan dreads and shuns the place. Hurriedly and excitedly Brynhilde urges Sieglinde to fly eastward, and to be brave through all suffering and want, for in her womb she bears " the world's most wonderful hero " — upon which we hear in the orchestra the theme that henceforth will characterise Siegfried:

(25)



Producing the pieces of Siegmund's sword from under her armour, she hands them to Sieglinde, bidding her preserve them, for from them the sword shall some day be re-wrought: as for the child's

name, it shall be "Siegfried," and he shall rejoice in victory (*erfreu' sich des Sieg's*).

Then comes one of those tremendous emotional climaxes that Wagner always knew how to hold back to the very last and then launch with overwhelming effect. The orchestra gives out fortissimo a theme — that of Redemption by Love:

that will play an important part in the later stages of the *Ring*, and over it Sieglinde's voice soars in an ecstasy of joy: "Oh, highest of wonders! Noblest of maids! Thou, true one, holiest comfort dost give! For him whom we loved I save the beloved one: may my heart's deep thanks win for thee joy!" Then she hastens away.

A storm now rages up from the back; the mountains are enveloped in black thunderclouds, while from the right a fiery glow appears. Wotan's voice is heard booming through a speaking-trumpet, imperiously bidding Brynhilde remain and face him. The Valkyries, trembling at the thought of the coming vengeance, conceal Brynhilde among them, and look anxiously towards the wood, that is now lit up by a bright glare.

At last Wotan, blazing with wrath, enters from the wood and strides impetuously towards the group of Valkyries on the height, searching for Brynhilde. The others, in a moving ensemble, plead with him to have compassion on her, but the angry god upbraids them bitterly for their womanish weakness: "I bred you to fare with joy to the fight, stony and ruthless your hearts I made, and ye wild ones now weep and whine when my wrath doth a traitor chastise!"

Again and again the orchestra gives out, in a fierce fortissimo, the theme of Wotan's Dejection (No. 20) as he asks them if they realise the crime that Brynhilde has committed. She was his loved one, his trusted one; no one but she knew the innermost depths of his thought; no one but she saw to the springs of his spirit; what he but wished, she shaped into deeds; and now she has broken the holy bond between them, defied his will, openly scorned his imperious commands, and turned against him the weapon that his will alone made hers! " Hear'st thou, Brynhilde? " he cries to the shrinking and still hidden Valkyrie; " thou, on whom byrnie, helm and spear, glory and grace, honour and fame I bestowed? Hear'st thou of what I accuse thee, and hid'st from thy accuser, in hope to escape his scourge? "

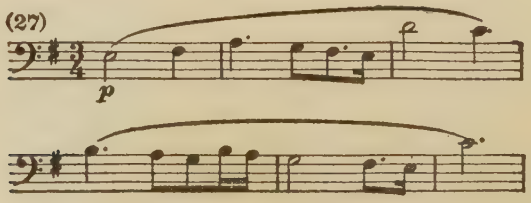
The tempest dies out of the music as Brynhilde emerges from the midst of the Valkyries, steps down from the rock humbly but still firmly, and approaches to within a little distance from Wotan. " Here am I, father," she says in quiet tones; " pronounce thou my sentence! " Wotan storms at her again: it is not he who sentences her, it is she herself who has shaped her own sentence. His will alone it was that woke her to life, yet against his will she has worked; her work was to fulfil his command, yet against him she has commanded; she was his wish-maiden, yet against his will she has wished; she was his shield-maid, yet against him she has raised her shield; she was his lot-chooser, yet against him she has chosen the lot; her task was to stir up heroes, yet against him has she stirred them up. What she once was he now has told her; what she now is, let her say to herself. She will be his wish-maiden no more; a Valkyrie once she was, henceforth she shall remain what she now is.

Brynhilde breaks into a wail at this denunciation of her, but the pitiless god goes on: no more shall she be sent forth from Valhalla to bring heroes to fill his hall; no more shall she fill his drinking-horn at the feasts of the gods; no more will he kiss her like a child; she is cast out from the race of the gods; broken is the bond between them, and she is for ever banned from his sight. " Thou takest away, then, all thou hast given? " asks Brynhilde.

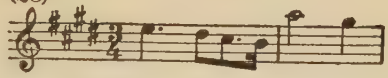
" No," replies the god, " one shall come who will take it all away " ; for the god means to lay her in sleep here upon the rock, defenceless against any man who shall find her and wake her.

The Valkyries make a passionate appeal for mercy, and the raging god now turns the full blast of his anger on them. Have they not heard his decree? The traitorous sister is banished from among them; no more shall she ride through the cloud-rack to the combat with them; her maidenhood's flower shall fade away, and a husband shall win him her womanly grace; she shall obey a masterful lord and sit by the hearth and spin, a sport and a shame to all mockers!

Brynhilde sinks to the ground with a cry, and the horror-struck Valkyries recoil from her. Does her fate affright them? Wotan asks. If so, let them leave her, and henceforth bide far from her; for if one of them should disobey his commands and give Brynhilde help, she shall share Brynhilde's fate. " Hence with you now; come to this rock no more! Swiftly hence on your coursers, lest my curse light on you here! " The Valkyries separate with wild cries and fly into the wood, crying " Woe! Woe! "

A mad clamour is heard in the wood, and by a vivid lightning flash that rends the clouds we see the Valkyries with loose bridles, crowded together and rushing madly away. Gradually the storm dies down and the scene becomes more tranquil as the evening twilight falls. Wotan and Brynhilde are left alone, she lying prostrate upon the ground. There is a long and solemn silence, during which we hear in turns an expressive version of the Death motive (in the bass clarinet), and then, in the same instrument, a new motive, that of the Wälsungs' Love:

which, as will be seen, shades off into the motive of Wotan's Dejection. The theme of the Wälsungs' Love, changed into the major:

(28)



becomes of great significance later.

For a time the positions of Wotan and Brynhilde do not alter; then at length she raises her head slowly, and at first timidly, then more firmly, asks Wotan if what she did was so shameful that her offence must so shamefully be scourged; was it so base that she herself must go down into such deep debasement; was it so full of dishonour that her own honour must be lost for ever? Gradually raising herself to a kneeling position she begs her father to look into her eyes, to master his wrath, and to reveal to her the hidden guilt that has made him set his face like a stone against her.

Anger has by now died out of Wotan, leaving behind it only a trail of bitterness and sadness. Brynhilde would have him see that in disobeying his commands she was really carrying out his secret wish, for he loved the Wälsung, and needed him for his own purpose. She had read Wotan, and seen what his sorrow hid from him. And when she had faced Siegmund, and looked into his eyes, and heard his defiance of life and death, she realised the hero's distress, and was moved to pity and love. And in doing this she has been more truly Wotan than Wotan himself, for he who had breathed this love into her breast — here we hear, in the orchestra, in soft tones, the major version of the Wälsungs' Love motive (No. 28) — was he whose will had bound Siegmund's lot with hers; and reading the god's thought, she had defied the god's command.

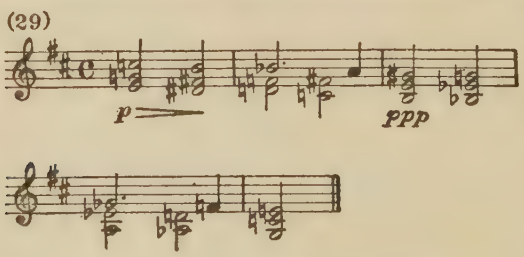
Wotan has to admit that in doing so she did what he himself would fain have done but might not do. He goes once more over the story of his problems, his difficulties, and his misery, and in the end dryly and sadly casts her off from him again; no more

can he take whispered counsel with her, no more can they work together as comrades.

Brynhilde recognises the justice of her punishment, though her offence, as it seems to her, was simply that she loved what she knew he loved. But for his own sake, she continues, let him not bring her to a shame that would stain him as well, for she is the half of his own being. If indeed she is to be banished from Valhalla, and to have a man for her master, let Wotan at least not deliver her up to any craven. The gloomy god repeats that from War-father she has turned, and War-father may not choose for her now. Then, softly and intimately, she touches him on what she knows is a weak point. The bravest of heroes, she tells him, will spring from the Wälsungs' line, and Sieglinde guards the fragments of the sword that Wotan shaped for Siegmund.

But Wotan, though sad at heart, still will not let himself be moved. He must fulfil her chastisement; she is to lie fast bound in sleep, and the man who finds the weaponless maid shall wake her and win her for his wife. His words are accompanied softly by the expressive modulations of the theme of the Magic Ban:

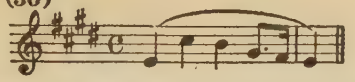
(29)



Falling on her knees before him, Brynhilde implores him to grant her one thing — at least to surround the rock with appalling horrors, so that only the freest and bravest of heroes may find her; if not, let Wotan destroy her with his spear, but not condemn her to woeful shame.

Her appeal is accompanied in the orchestra by a new motive that at first appears in the minor, but afterwards changes to the major form in which it is most generally known:

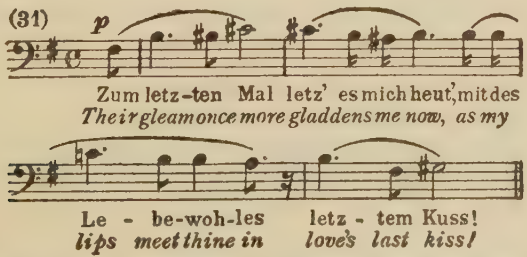
(30)



This is the Slumber motive. The crackling of Loge's fire-music is heard as she begs Wotan to surround the rock with fire, to lick with its tongue, to rend with its teeth, any craven who shall rashly dare to draw near to the dangerous height.

A wave of love and tenderness at last sweeps over Wotan; deeply moved, he turns quickly to Brynhilde, raises her to her feet, and gazes with profound emotion into her eyes. He bids his beloved child farewell. Never again may he give her loving greeting; never again shall she ride forth with him, or bring him the mead-cup at the gods' banquets; but around her couch he will kindle such a fire as never yet burned for a bride. At least no coward shall come to the rock, " for one alone winneth the bride, one freer than I, the god! " Who that free one shall be we are told by the orchestra, that gives out the Siegfried motive (No. 25).

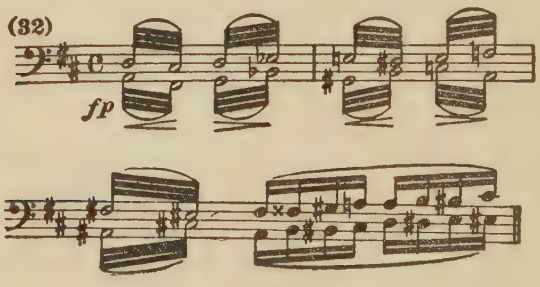
Radiant and exalted, Brynhilde falls on Wotan's breast; he holds her silently in a long embrace, while the orchestra pours out a passionate interlude commencing with the Wälsungs' Love motive (No. 27), that gradually merges into the Slumber motive (No. 30). Over a long symphonic development of this last in the orchestra, Wotan takes farewell of the eyes and lips of his loved one: on him, the care-ridden god, those eyes must now close for ever:

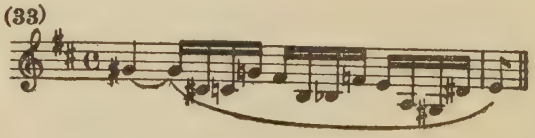
(31)

p
Zum letz-ten Mal letz' es mich heut', mit des
Their gleam once more gladdens me now, as my
Le - be-woh-les letz - tem Kuss!
lips meet thine in love's last kiss!

(the " Parting Kiss " motive), but they may yet beam on one more fortunate; now he must turn from her and " kiss her godhood away."

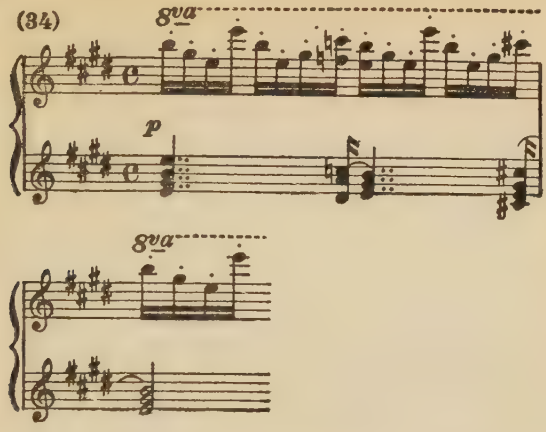
The mysterious modulations of the Magic Ban motive are heard, followed by a further treatment of the Slumber motive in combination with the melody of Wotan's last address to her, as he imprints a long kiss on her lips. Unconsciousness gently steals over her, and she sinks back in his arms with closed eyes. Underneath a broad-branched fir tree is a mossy bank, to which he leads her tenderly and on which he lays her down. He closes her helmet, contemplates the sleeping figure for a moment, and then completely covers it with the great steel Valkyrie shield.

With one more sorrowful look at her, he steps with solemn resolution into the centre of the stage, and turning his spear-point towards a large rock he loudly summons Loge to appear.

There is a quivering in the lower strings:

then a first dull flickering of fire in the orchestra as Wotan strikes the rock three times with his spear. Finally a stream of fire gushes from the rock:



It grows brighter and brighter, the Loge motive (see *Rhinegold*, No. 15), scored for glockenspiel, piccolo, harp, etc.:



now taking complete possession of the orchestra.

The vivid flames dart around Wotan, who, with his spear, commandingly directs them to form a sea of fire that engirdles the rock. " He who my spear-point's sharpness feareth," he cries, " ne'er breaks through this fierce-flaming fire " ; and Wagner, by making him sing the words to the Siegfried motive, once more plays the part of prophet to us. With a last sorrowful look at Brynhilde the god departs slowly through the fire, the orchestra discoursing all the while upon the lulling Slumber motive.

This second opera of the *Ring*, by reason of its rich emotions, may be regarded as akin to the slow movement of a symphony. *Siegfried* is something of a scherzo, and the *Twilight of the Gods* the finale.

SIEGFRIED

SOME years elapsed between the close of the *Valkyrie* and the commencement of *Siegfried.*

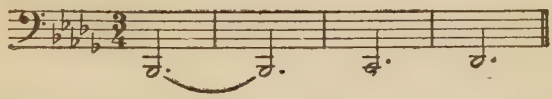
Sieglinde, whom we have seen sent by Brynhilde into the wood to escape the vengeance of Wotan, came to Nibelheim, the abode of the Nibelungs, where she was cared for by the tiny folk. She died in giving birth to a son, the Siegfried whom Brynhilde had foretold and named. Mime fancies he sees in this boy, who is healthy and fearless, a means by which to make himself possessor of the Ring and the Tarnhelm.

After Fafner (in the *Rhinegold*) had slain his brother Fasolt, he retired with his booty into a cave, Neidhöhle (the Cave of Envy), where, the better to guard his treasure, he transformed himself, by means of the Tarnhelm, into a dragon. He is too dull-witted to realise the illimitable possibilities that lie in the Ring; his sole instinct is to guard what he has already won by stretching out his monstrous bulk upon it. The slaying of the dragon would be a feat beyond the powers of the puny Mime, but the scheming dwarf thinks he may train up the young Siegfried to do the deed.

The Prelude gives us a tone-picture of Mime thinking out his problem. First of all, over a continuous rumble in the kettle-drums, we hear in the bassoons the motive of Reflection:

that we have already seen associated with Mime's thinking processes in the *Rhinegold*. A little later there comes out in the tuba the heavy theme that symbolises the Hoard:

(2)



This is followed by the hammering motive of the Nibelungs (see *Rhinegold* analysis, example No. 19), and this by the motive of Servitude (*Rhinegold*, No. 21). These last three motives are worked up to a climax, and then we hear the motive of the Ring (*Rhinegold*, No. 6) — another hint of what is passing through Mime's mind. We have yet a further light upon his thoughts when the bass trumpet suddenly gives out softly the theme of the Sword.

When the curtain rises we see a rocky cavern, with a large entrance in the background opening into the wood. On the left, against the wall, is a large smith's forge, built out of the natural rock. A rough chimney, also natural, goes up through the roof of the cave. The enormous bellows are of course artificial. Not far from the forge stands an anvil, and near it are implements pertaining to the craft of the smith. Little Mime, looking more shrunken and bleached than ever, and evidently with a load on his rudimentary mind, sits at the anvil, talking to himself as he hammers away at a sword.

We learn that Mime's swords are as a rule considered good enough for anyone; but the " malapert boy " with whom Mime has the misfortune to be associated has a way of smashing them with a single blow as if they were mere children's toys. Dejectedly and pettishly Mime throws the sword on the anvil, puts his arms akimbo, and stares reflectively at the ground. There is *one* sword he knows the boy could never shatter — Nothung; but the welding of the fragments of that weapon is beyond his skill. Sinking back, Mime makes a desperate effort to think the worrying problem out.

Deep down in the orchestra we hear the Dragon motive (*Valkyrie* analysis, No. 24), as Mime tells us how Fafner broods in the

darkness of the cave, guarding the Hoard under his enormous body. Siegfried, boy though he is, would soon destroy Fafner and win the Ring for Mime if only he had Nothung in his hands; but this Nothung, Mime wails, he cannot weld! He takes up his hammer again, but without much heart for his work, for he knows that this latest effort of his will share the fate of its predecessors as soon as Siegfried gets hold of it.

At this point Siegfried bursts in from the wood — a young man of perfect health and the most boisterous spirits, wearing a rough forester's dress, with a silver horn slung from a chain. He has bridled a great bear with a rope, and he amuses himself by driving the animal at the terrified Mime. His entry is signalised by the horn-call that will henceforth be associated with him:

(3)

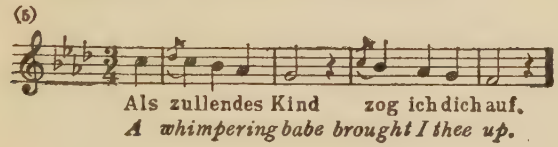
Mime drops the sword in terror and takes refuge behind the forge; Siegfried, pursuing him and pretending to set the bear on him, tells the animal to ask the dwarf for the promised sword. When Mime tells him that the weapon is there, all finished, Siegfried gives the bear a stroke on the back with the rope and drives him into the forest, whereupon Mime, trembling all over, emerges from his shelter behind the forge.

He peevishly asks why the boy treats him so badly, and Siegfried, having recovered from his laughter, explains that he has been out in the woods looking for a better friend than Mime, and the bear having appeared in response to the horn, he liked the animal better than his foster-father and brought him in with him to ask for the sword. Snatching the weapon from Mime, Siegfried soon smashes it in pieces on the anvil, and then vents his rage upon the shrinking dwarf to a theme:

(4)

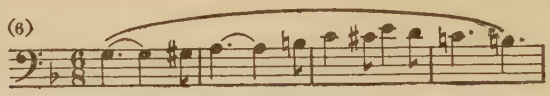
that typifies the boy's Joy in Life.

Having given his opinion of Mime's craftsmanship in the most insulting terms, he throws himself raging on a stone seat. Mime, who has prudently kept out of his way, reproaches him for his ingratitude; then, cautiously approaching the sulking boy, he tries to tempt him with some broth and meat he has prepared for him, but Siegfried, whose back remains turned to him, knocks the bowl out of his hand. Mime sends up a querulous squeak of self-pity: this is how his devotion is rewarded! And he tells Siegfried how he brought him up from a whimpering babe:



fed him and clothed him and made toys and a horn for him, smoothed his bed for him, quickened his wits, and now stays at home toiling and moiling for him while he is wandering through the woods at his pleasure; and for all this love and service his only wage is torment and hatred! Thoroughly sorry for himself, he bursts into sobs, but meeting Siegfried's gaze he timidly lowers his own eyes.

Scornfully Siegfried tells him that much indeed Mime has taught him, but one thing he has never been able to teach him — how to endure his sight! The more Mime does for him, he says, the less he likes him; and when he stands before him shuffling and scraping and blinking he feels an almost uncontrollable impulse to take him by the neck and make an end of him. *That* is how he has learned to love Mime! Why, he asks, does he ever return to him? Everything he meets in the forests, the trees, the birds, the fish in the brook, all these he loves far more; what is it, then, that brings him back to Mime again? If the dwarf is as wise as he pretends to be, let him find the answer to that puzzle.

Mime, recovering confidence a little, but still thinking it prudent to keep some way off, explains, to a motive in the orchestra that is associated in *Siegfried* with Love:

that it is because deep down in his heart the dwarf is really dear to him. Accompanied by the tender No. 6, he explains that always the young one yearns for the parent nest, even as he, Siegfried, longs for and loves his Mime.

But Siegfried is not convinced. While the orchestra weaves the loveliest strains out of No. 6, the boy puts another poser to the dwarf. He is not ignorant of what love is, for he has seen the birds singing for happiness together in the spring, husband and wife building them a nest and bringing up the tiny fledglings; he has seen also the deer and even the foxes and wolves in pairs, the father bringing the food, the mother suckling the young; where now is Mime's wife, that he may call her mother? The whimpering babe Mime indeed brought up, but how came the whelp to him?

Mime, in great embarrassment, tries to persuade him that he himself is " father and mother in one " to Siegfried. The angry boy tells him he is lying, for he can see for himself that the young ones are like the elders; he has seen his own image in the brook, and he is as unlike Mime as a toad is to a glittering fish, and surely no fish ever had a toad for father? Seizing Mime by the throat he threatens to tear him to pieces unless he tells him who are his father and mother. When Mime has been released and has recovered his breath, he reproaches Siegfried once more for his ingratitude and hatred, and promises to give him the truth at last.

(From this point onwards to the end of the *Ring* it becomes almost impossible to keep referring in detail to the various musical motives as they recur. In *Siegfried* and the *Twilight of the Gods* the majority of the motives employed are those we have already heard in the *Rhinegold* and the *Valkyrie*. The orchestral tissue is almost entirely made up of repetitions or variations of these motives; and the reader may take it for granted that wherever mention is made of any character that has already appeared in the earlier operas, or anything that has happened there, the corresponding motive will be drawn upon. Thus in the narrative of

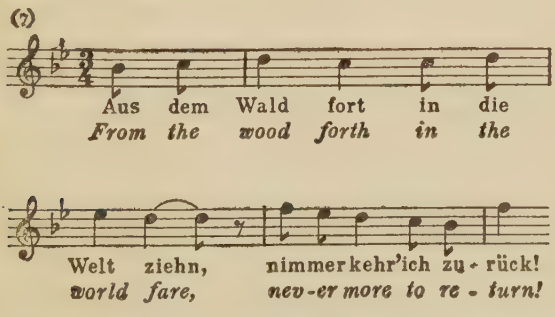
Mime with which we are now about to deal, we start with the theme of the Wälsungs' Woe (*Valkyrie,* No. 6), pass from that to the Wälsungs' Love (*Valkyrie,* No. 5), thence to the Sword motive, and so on).

Mime's story is of how he once found a woman weeping in the wood, how he helped her to his cave, sheltered her, and tended her as best he could, and how she died in giving birth to a son; it was the dying mother herself who had given him his name, so that as " Siegfried " he should be fair and strong. The dwarf keeps interlarding his story with whining testimonials to his own kindness to the child, but Siegfried keeps pressing him for more vital details.

Mime can tell him that his mother's name was Sieglinde, but of his father he only knows that he was killed in combat. Siegfried is sceptical, and demands evidence of the truth of all this. Reflecting for a moment, Mime produces the two fragments of the broken sword — the only " paltry pay," he pathetically interjects, he has received for all he has done for Siegfried; these fragments the dying mother gave him, saying that the child's father had borne the sword in the last of his fights.

Exuberantly Siegfried cries that this is his own rightful sword, and that Mime must forge it for him, and that this very day; then, when his father's sword is his, he will fare forth into the world, never more to return; he will be free, as the birds, the animals, and the fishes are free:

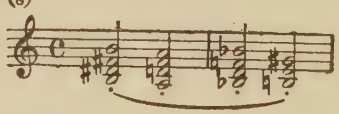
(7)



He rushes impetuously into the forest, leaving Mime in the utmost terror. Here is a new problem for the dwarf to think out. If this

young hero leaves him, how can he hope to deal with Fafner? On the other hand, though Siegfried may slay Fafner with Nothung, how, with *his* limitations as a smith, is Mime to weld these formidable fragments together again?

While he is thinking distressfully about all this, Wotan comes in from the forest by the door at the back of the scene. Wotan is now the Wanderer; he wears a long mantle of dark blue, and carries his spear as a staff; on his head is a large hat with a broad round brim, that comes low down over the eye that is lacking. Two motives, or rather two complementary sections of the same motive:

(8)

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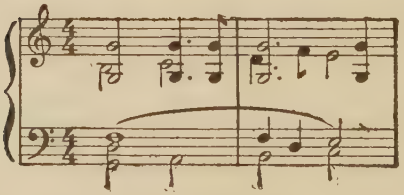


are always used henceforth to characterise the majesty of the disguised god and his dignified goings to and fro on the earth.

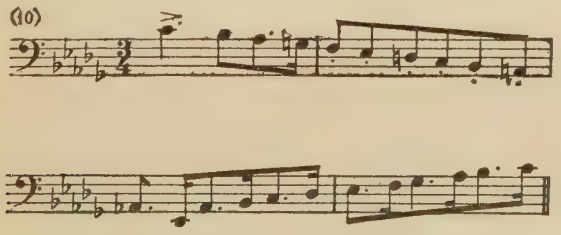
Mime, who of course does not know who his visitor is, starts up in terror. Wotan advances slowly step by step: the world, he tells the shrinking dwarf, knows him as the Wanderer; everywhere good men give him greeting; much he has questioned and much he has learned; he has spoken wise words to many and warded from them woe and sorrow. He keeps advancing slowly till he has come right down to the hearth.

Mime, who has become more uneasy, asks him to take his leave, for he has wits enough of his own, and has no need of the newcomer's boasted wisdom. If he is so proud of his wits, the Wanderer good-humouredly rejoins, let them put each other to the

test; his own head shall be Mime's should he be unable to answer anything the dwarf may ask him. Pulling himself together, Mime agrees to ask the Wanderer three questions.

After a great intellectual effort, he shoots out the first of these. The Wanderer, by his own account, has gone over all the world: what then is the race that dwells in the deepest caverns? The Wanderer gives the answer in full — it is the Nibelungs, who dwell in Nibelheim; Alberich was once their master, having tamed them by the might of a Ring. Mime's second question, put after still more profound meditation, is: " What is the race that dwells on the broad back of the earth? " The Wanderer replies that it is the giants: the chief of them were Fasolt and Fafner, who made the Hoard their own, and with it the Ring, but the Ring bred strife between the brothers, and Fafner slew Fasolt, and now guards the Hoard as a fearful dragon.

Mime, quite overcome by the wisdom of his visitor, reflects still more deeply and produces his third question: " What is the race that dwells on the cloud-covered heights? " The Wanderer, to the soft accompaniment of the Valhalla motive, tells him that on the cloud-covered heights dwell the gods, with Valhalla for their hall. Wotan is their head; from a branch of the world's ash tree he made a shaft, and then ruled the world, with the point of the spear on which were engraved the runes of treaties (here the deep brass of the orchestra gives out an important new motive, that of the Might of the Gods):



before him bow both the Nibelungs and the giants — before him, the spear's mighty lord! As if by accident the spear touches the ground, and a slight rumble of thunder is heard, which terrifies

Mime. Has he answered the questions? asks the Wanderer placidly; does his head remain his own?

Baffled and perplexed, Mime has to admit that the visitor has won the right to retain his head, and once more he begs him to go on his way. But the Wanderer has not finished with him yet. Mime, it seems, did not greet the guest with due courtesy; and having tried to capture his visitor's head, his own now, by rule, is forfeit unless he too can answer three questions.

Terrified but submissive, the dwarf braces himself for the ordeal; his mother-wit, he admits, is moidered, but he will do his best. Seating himself comfortably, the Wanderer poses the first question: " What is the name of the race that Wotan wreaked his wrath on, and yet loves more than his life? " Plucking up courage, Mime replies that they are the Wälsungs; from two of them, Siegmund and Sieglinde, sprang Siegfried.

Good-humouredly complimenting him on his cleverness, the Wanderer puts the second question: " Siegfried is being brought up by a wise Nibelung who means to send him to fight Fafner, so that the dwarf may win him the Ring and the Hoard; now, what sword is it with which Siegfried shall slay Fafner? " Mime is sure of himself now. Rubbing his hands together gleefully, and quite forgetting his fears in the bright prospect of the future, he replies that the sword is Nothung; it was struck in an ash tree by Wotan, and only a mighty hero could draw it forth; Siegmund was that hero, and he bore the sword in fight till it was shattered on Wotan's spear; the pieces are being treasured by a cunning smith, for he knows that with them the Dragon will be slain by Siegfried.

With a deep-chested laugh, the Wanderer compliments Mime on his cleverness; never was there so wise a smith on earth! But now for the third question: " By whose hand shall the fragments of Nothung be welded again? " This is too much for Mime. Starting up in the wildest terror he screams out that he does not know; would he had never seen the accursed steel, for it is so hard that he hammers at it in vain! What with the old vexations and the new terror his jarred nerves give way, and he throws his tools about as if demented.

Rising quietly from the hearth, the Wanderer tells him that though Mime, over-confident in his own wisdom, has forfeited his head, he will give it him back along with a valuable piece of information: only he who has never known what fear is shall forge Nothung afresh. Let Mime look well to his wise old head; it shall be forfeit to him who has never known fear.

When the Wanderer has left, Mime's nerve goes completely; he stares wildly before him and begins to tremble violently. In a marvellous piece of orchestral tone-painting Wagner shows us the whole of nature apparently conspiring to drive the poor little Nibelung mad: the forest is alive with flickering flames; the wind howls and the earth roars, and from the maw of the Dragon in his distant cave comes a fearsome bellowing. With a loud shriek Mime collapses behind the anvil just as Siegfried bursts in from the forest to demand the expected sword.

For a time he cannot find Mime; when at last he discovers him, the mammering imp manages bit by bit to tell him that he has learned that Nothung can be forged only by one who has never known fear. It has already occurred to his little brain that Siegfried may be such a one, in which case he may perhaps still be able to use him for his own ends. The first thing is to find out whether Siegfried has even known fear. He describes such a scene in the forest as that which he himself has recently witnessed, and asks if Siegfried has ever been terrified when the forces of nature have hurled themselves at him like that. Siegfried assures him that the feeling is strange to him, but he would like to experience it were it possible. Can Mime teach him what this fear is?

Mime will do his best if only Siegfried will follow his instructions faithfully. He knows of a horrible dragon who slays and swallows men; let Siegfried follow him to Fafner's lair, and he shall learn what fear is. Siegfried is delighted at the prospect; let Mime forge him his father's sword, take him to Fafner's cave, and then — out into the world and freedom! Once more Mime assures him that the forging of the sword is beyond his poor powers. Belike one who has never known fear might accomplish it, he suggests; and the

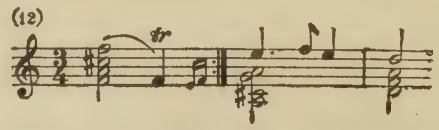
impatient boy, striding to the hearth, vows that he will forge his father's sword himself.

A new motive, symbolising Siegfried's joy in his own strength (it is obviously derived from Siegfried's horn-call, No. 3):

takes possession of the orchestra as Siegfried sets impetuously to work. He makes a great heap of charcoal on the hearth, blows up the fire, places the fragments of the Sword in the vice, and files them, Mime all the while watching him from a little distance. Mime offers technical advice from time to time, but the impatient youth prefers his own unconventional methods, and Mime has to admit that they promise to be successful; " the fool is favoured by folly alone," he says.

While Siegfried is filing away at the fragments, Mime speculates anxiously on the future. Siegfried will forge the sword, that is clear, and then will he not use it against Mime himself, unless he first learns fear from Fafner? On the other hand, if Siegfried does learn fear, how then will he slay the Dragon and win the Ring for Mime? Or again, by what means can *he* master the fearless boy?

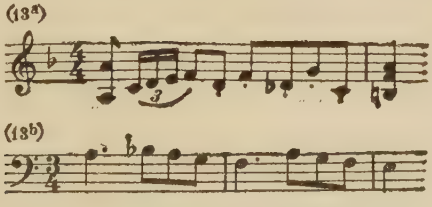
Siegfried, still busy at his work, demands the name of the sword, and learning that it is Nothung, he addresses it in a motive formed out of the descending octave we have already seen associated with the Sword:



This is the Forging Song — a masterpiece of musical characterisation, in which we have not only the whole expression of all Siegfried's vigour and joy in life, but the most extraordinary realism in the orchestra, that seems to be belching out the heat of the forge and sending up tongues of flame.

As the song goes on, Mime, having collected his wits, works out a plan. After the fight with Fafner, Siegfried will be faint; Mime will bring him a refreshing draught, in which he will put spices that will send him into a sound sleep; then, with the selfsame weapon that Siegfried forged, he will put him out of his way, and the Ring and the Hoard will be his. He rubs his hands in delight, and asks the absent Wanderer gleefully if *now* he thinks Mime dull.

By this time the contents of the crucible are glowing; Siegfried pours them into a mould and plunges the mould into the water-trough, which steams and hisses as the mould cools. Then he thrusts the steel into the fire and pulls vigorously at the bellows for a time, after which he takes the mould from the fire, breaks it, and lays the glowing steel on the anvil in the centre of the stage, where he proceeds to hammer it into shape. Meanwhile Mime, who has sprung up in delight, shakes spices and herbs into a cooking-pot, which he places on the hearth. Flatteringly and with many a snigger he explains to Siegfried that the old smith has been brought to shame, and now is reduced to cooking for the boy turned master. Siegfried, exulting in his strength and skill, keeps hammering away at the Sword, that once laughed cold, he tells it, but now is flushed with fire as it yields up its inward strength to him who has tamed its pride. Two fresh motives, both associated with the forging:

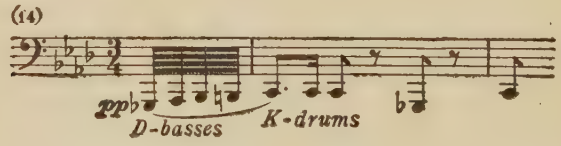


play prominent parts in the music to this episode.

The hammering finished, Siegfried brandishes the Sword and plunges it into the water-trough, laughing lustily at the hissing sound it makes. Then he fashions the blade into a handle, Mime all the while painting for himself a rosy future in which he will win the Ring and make Alberich and the other Nibelungs his

slaves; the poor dwarf they despised shall be master of them all; even the gods and the heroes shall bow to his might, and the whole world fall prostrate at his command.

By now the Sword is completely finished. Siegfried brandishes it aloft and hails it with a great exulting cry, an extraordinary effect of consummation and triumph being attained at the climax by the apparently simple means of swinging the previous minor tonality of the Forging Song over to the major. With one great blow he splits the anvil from top to bottom. He holds the Sword aloft exultantly, while Mime, who has jumped on to a stool in his ecstasy, falls terrified to the ground as the curtain falls.

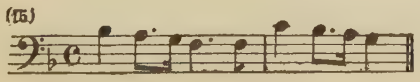
The second act opens with an orchestral prelude that, in Wagner's usual way, elucidates the drama by the juxtaposition of various motives. First of all we hear the theme of Fafner as the Dragon:

This will be seen to be derived from the motive of the Giants (*Rhinegold,* No. 11), the deepening of the interval of a perfect fourth into an augmented fourth being curiously suggestive of the descent of Fafner into the kingdom of the brute. This kettledrum figure plays a large part in the Prelude. We also hear, among other motives, those of the Ring, the Curse, and Annihilation (*Rhinegold,* No. 24).

The curtain having risen, we see a deep forest; at the back of the stage is the entrance to a cave; towards the middle of the stage the ground rises and forms a little knoll. To the left, through the trees, can be seen a fissured cliff. It is a dark night, and at first the spectator's eye can distinguish nothing. To the accompaniment of the Annihilation motive we hear the voice of Alberich, who is lying by the rocky cliff, brooding darkly; it is only gradually that his form can be picked out in the obscurity.

Alberich is at his accustomed task of waiting and watching by the cave, and longing for the day to dawn that shall decide his own fate and that of the others. From the forest on the right comes a storm of wind, accompanied by a bluish light, which latter attracts Alberich's eye. The glow comes nearer for a moment; then the wind dies down and the light fades away as the Wanderer, emerging from the forest, pauses opposite Alberich. The latter challenges the intruder; then, recognising him by a ray of moonlight that suddenly breaks through the clouds, the angry Nibelung bids his old enemy go on his way and leave him in peace; but the Wanderer calmly assures him that he comes now only as witness, not as worker.

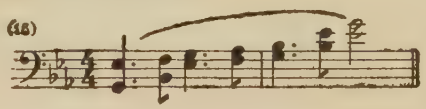
Alberich bittery reproaches Wotan for his treachery and taunts him with his fatal weakness — in virtue of the runes of treaty upon his spear he cannot repeat his former exploit and rob Fafner of the Ring, for were he to try to do so the spear would crumble to dust. He knows the care that oppresses the god, the fear that the Ring will again fall into Alberich's hands. Were it to do so, he says, he would not use it like the dull-witted Fafner, but by its might would bring Valhalla's towers crashing down and make himself master of the world.

Quietly the Wanderer tells him that he knows all this well, and it troubles him not; the might of the Ring shall go to him who can win it for himself. Alberich knows Wotan's plan to rear a youth who shall do the gods' will without help or urging from the gods, and he scornfully throws this knowledge at the Wanderer. Tranquilly the god advises him to spare his wrangling for his brother Mime, who is bringing to him a boy who shall slay Fafner for him. The boy is ignorant of the gods and their will, ignorant even of the Ring, and Wotan will give him no help; he is his own lord, and will stand or fall by his own power.

At this point we hear a motive:

typical of Siegfried's Freedom. The Wanderer makes everything clear to Alberich: a hero is coming to rescue the Hoard; Fafner will die, and the gold shall be his who shall seize it. If he would know more, let him speak to Fafner; perhaps if Alberich warns the Dragon of his coming death he will give up the Hoard peaceably. The Wanderer himself will waken Fafner for him.

Standing on the knoll in front of the cave he calls loudly to the Dragon within: " Here stands a friend to warn thee of danger; thy life he will leave thee, wilt thou but grant him the treasure thou guardest! " From within the cave, through a speaking-trumpet, comes the heavy voice of the aroused Fafner. Alberich tells him that a hero is coming to measure his strength with his. " My hunger's keen! " is the laconic reply. It is the Ring alone that the hero wants, continues Alberich; let Fafner give that to the Nibelung and he will stay the fight; the Hoard shall be Fafner's, and long and undisturbed he can sleep upon it. Fafner's famous reply is regarded by the commentators as typical of the brutish possessor of wealth who merely loves gold for its own sake: " I lie and possess; let me slumber! " He gives a cavernous yawn and relapses into silence.

The Wanderer laughs aloud and then turns again to Alberich with a parting piece of advice; to the accompaniment of a motive that has already figured in the *Ring* in one shape or another, notably in connection with Erda:



he tells him that " all things go as e'en they must, and no whit may they be altered." Now he will leave him to himself and his brother Mime — but soon he shall know what now he does not know.

The god disappears rapidly into the forest, accompanied by a rising wind and a bright gleam. Sending a curse after him, Alberich settles down again to his watch. He slips into the cleft at the side, and the stage remains empty for a moment.

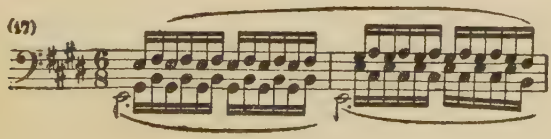
Morning dawns as Siegfried and Mime enter, the former wearing

the Sword in a girdle of bast-rope. Mime, after a cautious look round, tells Siegfried that this is the place. Seating himself under a great lime tree, Siegfried asks if it is here that fear shall be taught him. A long way has he journeyed hither with Mime, he says, and now the dwarf must leave him; for if he does not learn what fear may be he will go forth into the world alone. " Trust me, dear one," says Mime, " if today and here thou learnst it not, truly no other place, no other time will teach thee fear "; and he shows him the gloomy cavern in which lies the grim dragon who will swallow him up with just one snap of his vast and horrible jaws. From his mouth the Dragon pours a poisonous slaver, one drop of which, should it light on him, will rot Siegfried's bones and body; and he swings a monstrous tail, which, if it should clasp him, will break his bones like glass.

Siegfried tranquilly assures him that he will guard against all this, and asks if the monster has a heart, and if it lies where it usually is in beasts and men; if so, he will strike Nothung straight through his heart. Is this babble all that the old bungler has to say to him? he asks impatiently. But Mime bids him wait; when once he sees and hears the dragon, and his sight grows faint and the forest spins around him, and his heart begins to beat wildly in his breast, he will think then of the great love of old Mime who brought him hither.

The impatient boy drives the " slinking and blinking " dwarf away, and Mime goes off to lie by a spring close by, telling Siegfried to look for his foe when the sun is at its height, for then Fafner may crawl from the cavern to drink at the fountain. Mime makes a last attempt to offer counsel and help, but Siegfried rises and with furious gestures drives him away.

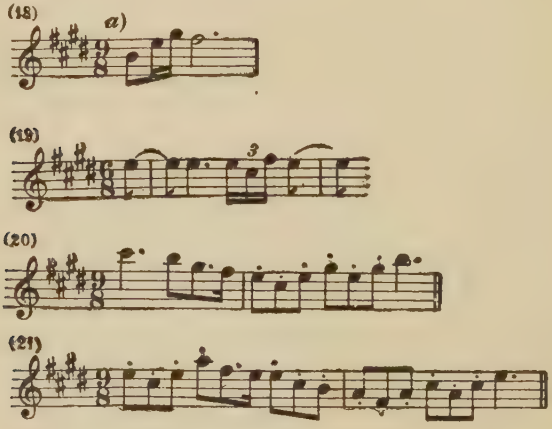
Then begins the scene that is known in the concert room as the Forest Murmurs. A gentle rustling:



is heard as Siegfried stretches himself out comfortably under the lime tree and gazes after the departing Mime. " No father of mine, this! " he says, and he gives himself up to the soft delights of the woodland, that is all the sweeter to his young senses now that the ugly old dwarf no longer grieves his eyes.

He falls into a reverie and wonders what his father was like in life — " full sure like myself! " What his mother was like, alas! he can never learn; but he is sure that her eyes were clear and tender, and gentle like those of the roe-deer, but much more beautiful. Why did she die through him? he asks softly; must all human mothers perish in giving life to their sons? Sad were that were it true! " Ah! " he cries as the lovely No. 5 wells up in the violas and 'cellos, " might these eyes by my mother be gladdened! "

Sighing gently, he leans still farther back, and a deep silence settles upon the scene, broken only by the vague murmurs of the forest. Siegfried gradually becomes conscious of the song of a bird in the branches above him, whose call takes at various times the following forms:



The dreaming boy longs to be able to understand the bird's message, for surely it would tell him something of his mother? Mime has told him that the song of birds has a meaning, if man could only discover it. But how is this to be done?

After a moment's reflection he resolves to try to follow the bird's singing with notes of his own, on a reed; thus singing the bird's language himself, it may be that the meaning of the song will become clear to him. Running to a stream that flows near by, he cuts a reed with his sword and hurriedly fashions a rude rustic pipe out of it. He makes three or four attempts to play upon this rough instrument (the tones are made for him by an English horn behind the scenes, playing harshly and out of tune). Siegfried is angry for a moment at his failure, then gives it up with a smile. But the bird's singing will not let him rest; on the stupid reed, he says, he cannot make an intelligible sound, but how if he were to give the bird a strain of his own on his horn? Taking the silver horn that hangs at his waist he blows on it, loudly and lustily, a fantasia upon his typical call (No. 3), every now and then sustaining a note for a long time and looking up expectantly at the bird.

At last there is a movement in the background. Fafner has been disturbed in his cave; the Dragon's theme in the tuba is heard in combination with Siegfried's horn-call as Fafner breaks through the underwood and drags his huge bulk up to the higher ground until the fore part of his body rests on this; then he utters a cavernous yawn. Siegfried turns round and looks at him in astonishment; Fafner, who has at the same time caught sight of Siegfried, pauses on the knoll.

The situation strikes Siegfried as humorous; he has been making music to draw some living thing of loveliness to him out of the forest, and this ugly monster is what his lay has brought him! " What is there? " Fafner bellows at him. (The player of the part sings through a speaking-trumpet that passes up into the Dragon's jaws.) Siegfried accosts him cheerily. He would fain know what fear is; perhaps this new-found companion can teach him? If not, he shall perish by Siegfried's sword. Fafner laughs heavily at this arrogance: " Drink I came for," he says, " and now I find food! " whereupon he opens his jaws and shows his teeth.

The irreverent boy compliments him on these, but thinks he has opened his gullet far too wide, and says it will have to be closed. Badinage and repartee are not the Dragon's strong points; resent-

ing Siegfried's crude humour, he threatens him with his tail, and at last, losing his temper, roars to the boastful boy to come on.

Siegfried draws his sword, springs towards Fafner, and puts himself in an attitude of defiance. Fafner drags himself farther up the knoll and spits fire from his nostrils at Siegfried, who avoids the venom, springs nearer, and stands at one side. Fafner lashes at him with his tail, and has nearly caught him, when the boy leaps over him at one bound and wounds him in the tail. With a roar of pain and rage Fafner draws his tail back quickly and rears up the front part of his body to hurl it on Siegfried; his breast is thus exposed, and Siegfried, quickly perceiving the place of the heart, plunges his sword in it up to the hilt. Fafner raises himself still higher in his pain, then sinks down on the wound as Siegfried lets go the sword and leaps to one side.

The dying monster, in a weaker voice, asks the stripling who it was that goaded his childish spirit to this murderous deed. The boy cannot tell him, nor even who he is; it seems to him that he had been stirred to the fight only by his own heart. Fafner, in pity for the boy, enlightens him as to certain things. Of the two mighty brothers, he says, Fasolt and Fafner, both are now dead; Fafner slew Fasolt for the gold, and now he himself falls by the hand of a boy. Let the young hero heed himself well, for he who drove him so blindly to this murderous deed is plotting his death also.

Fafner raises himself with a sigh and expires, and in doing so rolls to the side. Siegfried, in drawing the sword out of his breast, gets some of the Dragon's blood on his hands. He involuntarily puts his fingers into his mouth to suck the blood from them, and thereby makes himself able now to understand the song of the forest bird, which, from the branches of the lime tree above him, sings, to the melodies of Nos. 20 and 21, " Hei! Siegfried has won him the Nibelungs' Hoard! Hid in the cavern he will find it! If he finds the Tarnhelm it will serve him for wonderful deeds, but could he discover the Ring it would make him the master of the world! " Siegfried has listened enraptured: softly and earnestly he thanks the bird for its counsel, then turns towards the back and disappears for a while into the cave.

When the stage is empty Mime slinks on, looking round timidly and cautiously to make sure that Fafner is dead; at the same moment Alberich comes out of the cleft on the other side. He looks hard at Mime, who, not being able to find Siegfried, is making towards the cave at the back, when Alberich rushes at him and bars his way. There ensues a scene, that is most amusing for the spectator, of hectic recrimination between the pair of precious rogues. Each claims the gold for his own, and bids the other keep his greedy eyes and hands off it. " It is mine by right," claims Alberich, " for who was it robbed the Rhine of its gold and wrought the spell of the Ring? " " And who," counters Mime, " made the Tarnhelm for you? "

So the rapid and petulant dialogue goes on, each upbraiding and taunting the other. Alberich's greater vehemence at last beats Mime down. Scratching his tousled and bewildered head, the dwarf suggests a compromise: Alberich can have the Ring if he will let Mime keep the Tarnhelm; that is surely fair to both. He rubs his hands insinuatingly, but Alberich rejects the suggestion with a scornful laugh: would he ever be safe in his sleep if Mime had the Tarnhelm? Beside himself with rage, Mime shrieks, " Not the Tarnhelm? Naught then do I get? " The ruthless Alberich declares that he will not even give him a nail. Then, in a towering temper, Mime shouts that neither the Ring nor the Tarnhelm shall Alberich have, for he will call Siegfried, who will avenge him with his sword on this dear brother of his.

Just then Siegfried appears in the background. They notice, as he comes forward slowly and thoughtfully, that he has passed over the treasure as a whole, taking only what have no doubt seemed to him charming childish toys — the Tarnhelm and the Ring. Laughing maliciously, Mime tells his brother to ask Siegfried to give him the Ring: then he slips back into the forest. Alberich at the same time disappears into his cleft, saying as he goes, " And yet to its lord shall it again belong! "

The unsophisticated boy muses upon his booty. He has brought away these two baubles not because he understands the value of them, but because the bird had counselled him to do so, and

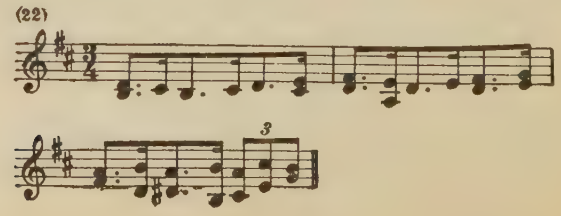
because they will serve as witnesses that he has vanquished Fafner in fight: of fear, however, he has still learned nothing. He thrusts the Tarnhelm into his girdle and puts the Ring on his finger.

Once more there is a deep silence except for the forest murmurs (No. 17); then the voice of the bird is heard once more, telling Siegfried not to trust in the treacherous Mime, and to listen alert to the lies of the hypocritical knave, for having tasted the blood of the Dragon Siegfried will now be able to pierce through the dwarf's words to the secret meaning of his heart.

By a gesture Siegfried signifies that he understands. Seeing Mime slinking towards him he remains motionless, leaning on his sword, observant and self-contained, during the whole of the scene that follows. Mime now sets himself to cajole the boy, whom he believes to be as unsophisticated as ever. Coming nearer to Siegfried, bowing and scraping and making wheedling gestures, he greets him, in music that is a masterpiece of oily hypocrisy, as the hero who has slain the Dragon.

When Siegfried speaks, we realise that a change has taken place in him. In quiet, grave tones he tells the dwarf that, grim and furious as the Dragon was, his death grieves him when he sees that far eviller rascals go through the world unpunished: "He who egged me on to the fight, I hate him more than the Dragon!"

What follows calls for a little sympathetic imagination on the part of the spectator. Mime imagines himself to be saying cajoling and deceiving things to Siegfried, but the latter hears through them the secret murderous thought of the cunning dwarf, and it is these words, of course, that *we* hear. Soon, he says, he will close Siegfried's eyes in eternal slumber, for he has done the deed that Mime desired, and now Mime will rob him of all he has won: at this point we hear a new motive in the orchestra, that of the Booty:



He has always hated Siegfried and all his kind, he continues, and longed to get the gold from the Dragon, and now, unless Siegfried gives him all, the boy in turn shall lose his life.

It puzzles and annoys Mime that Siegfried answers him not according to what he is saying but according to what he is thinking. The boy must be tired after his fight, the dwarf continues; will he not take a draught of the cordial that his loving Mime has brewed for him? " So then," says Siegfried, " of my weapon and what it has won me, ring and booty, you would rob me? " Mime makes a last desperate attempt to make the booby understand: let the boy just take one draught, and his darkened senses will make him an easy prey to Mime; but as the dwarf would nowhere be safe should Siegfried awake, he will take the sword and hack his head off; then shall Mime have both rest and the Ring — and he gives a childish chuckle at the thought.

He pours the liquor into the drinking horn and offers it to Siegfried, assuring him that this is the last draught he will ever drain. Siegfried, unable to endure the loathsome scene any longer, raises his sword, and, his whole being expressive of violent loathing, aims a swift blow at Mime, who immediately falls dead; from the cleft Alberich's mocking laughter rings out, while the orchestra gives out an echo of Mime's Reflection motive (No. 1), as if ironically drawing attention to what the dwarf's elaborate scheming has brought him to.

Siegfried quietly puts back his sword again, gazes at the fallen body, and says, " Nothung pays envy's wage: therefore truly did I forge it " ; but from the orchestra there wells up a sinister reminder of the motive of the Curse. Siegfried picks up Mime's body, carries it to the knoll, and throws it into the cave, bidding it there lie on the Hoard that the dwarf has so long desired, and that can now be his for ever; and by way of a guardian against thieves he pushes the body of the Dragon before the entrance to the cave, thus stopping up the latter completely.

It is now midday. Siegfried, after gazing thoughtfully for a while into the cave, turns away and passes his hand over his brow. He is hot and somewhat agitated: he lies down in the shade of the

lime tree and again looks up into its branches. The stabbing thought comes that he is alone in the world: he has neither brother nor sister; his mother died, his father fell, and neither saw their son; the only comrade he has ever had was a loathsome old dwarf who never loved him, but plotted only to entrap him, until in the end he was forced to slay him.

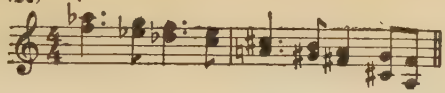
To the accompaniment of a new motive symbolical of the Joy of Love:

that is followed by a lovely version of the expressive No. 5, he implores the bird to give him his counsel again and find for him a faithful friend. The bird replies that Siegfried has slain the evil dwarf, and now a glorious bride awaits him; she sleeps on a rocky height, but is surrounded by fierce flickering fire; he who shall break through the flames and waken the bride shall win Brynhilde for wife.

Siegfried starts up joyously, a new life throbbing in his veins. The bird has told him that Brynhilde shall be wakened by one alone — one who has never felt fear. Laughing with delight, Siegfried declares that this is he, and bids the bird show him the way to the rock. The bird flutters forth, circles over Siegfried for a moment, and after teasingly leading him hither and thither for a little while takes a definite course to the background, Siegfried following it.

The orchestral Prelude to the third act is another of those symphonic pieces in which Wagner, by the play of one leading motive against another, partly recapitulates the preceding action, partly forecasts the future course of the drama. The Prelude is mostly made up of reiterations of the theme of the Need of the Gods (*Valkyrie,* No. 21), the Treaty motive (*Valkyrie*, No. 8), the motive that is associated at times with Erda, at times with the Norns (*Rhinegold*, No. 26), and a motive typical henceforth of the Twilight of the Gods:

(24)



These motives are woven into a tissue of magnificent energy.

The curtain having risen, we see a wild spot at the foot of a rocky mountain, which rises steeply at the left towards the back. It is night: a storm is raging, with violent thunder and lightning; the former ceases after a while, but the lightning continues to flash through the clouds. We hear the Magic Ban motive (*Valkyrie*, No. 29), and that of the Annunciation of Fate (*Valkyrie*, No. 22), as the Wanderer enters and strides resolutely to a cavernous opening in a rock in the foreground; there, leaning on his spear, he calls towards the mouth of the cave a summons to Erda to awake from her timeless sleep.

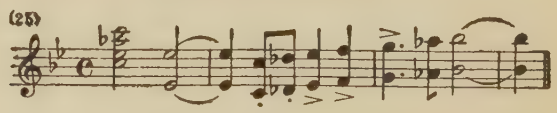
The cavern begins to glow with a bluish light, and Erda rises slowly from the depths: she appears to be covered with hoarfrost, and her hair and garments give out a shimmering light. In deep, impressive tones she asks who it is that breaks her dream.

The Wanderer opens out his troubled heart to her. He has been through the world, searching for knowledge and wisdom; to Erda, the wisest of women, is known everything that the deeps hide and that air and water, hill and dale enclose; she alone can see to the secret heart of the world; it is to win him her wisdom that he has wakened her from sleep. She bids him go to the Norns, who wake while she is sleeping; it is they who wind the rope of fate, and sit and spin what Erda knows.

Urgently Wotan tells her that the Norns have no power either to make or to mar; they are merely the obedient weavers of fate. It is of Erda's wisdom he would now ask a question — how to hold back a rolling wheel? To Wotan, Erda replies tranquilly, she once bore a wish-maiden, who is both brave and wise; why does he not go and ask counsel of Erda's and Wotan's child? The Wanderer answers that Brynhilde disobeyed him and he laid her to sleep upon the fire-girt rock: what counsel can come from her? Erda seems for a while sunk in dreams, then, after a long silence, she

says in deep tones, " Dazed am I since I awoke: wild and strange seems the world! The Valkyrie suffers penance of sleep while her all-knowing mother slept? Doth then pride's teacher punish pride? Is the deed-enkindler wroth with the deed? He who wardeth right, he the truth's upholder, tramples on right, reigns by untruth? Let the dreamer descend again! Let sleep again seal my wisdom! "

But Wotan will not be put off. He will not let the all-wise one go until she, who once planted a bitter barb in his heart and filled him with fear of ruin and shame and anguish, now tells him how the god may conquer his care; her wisdom is great, but his will is greater, and she must answer him.

After a long silence he resumes: " Thou unwise one, hear thou my words, that care-free ever thou mayst sleep! " No more is he grieved, he says, by the thought of the downfall of the gods, since he himself has willed it so: what once he resolved when his mind was torn with anguish he now wills gaily and gladly. Once, in his anger and loathing, he flung the world to the Nibelung Alberich; now he wills his heritage to the young Wälsung — one who, though chosen by him, knows him not — the bravest of boys, free of Wotan's counsel, has won for himself the Ring, and being full of the joy of love and knowing no envy, Alberich's curse has no power over him; and as he knows no fear, it is he who shall waken Brynhilde, who shall do a deed that shall redeem the world. So let Erda slumber on, and in her dreams behold his downfall: whatever may betide now, the god in rapture yields to the ever-young. As he speaks of willing his heritage to another we hear in the orchestra the World-Inheritance motive:

He dismisses Erda, who, her eyes closed, begins to descend gradually and at last disappears, the light dying away with her. The storm has ceased, and the scene is faintly lit by the moon. Advancing close to the cavern, the Wanderer leans with his back

against it, his face turned towards the stage, awaiting the coming of Siegfried, whom he has seen in the distance.

The forest bird now flutters across the scene, and then, as if alarmed, disappears hastily at the back. (It has caught sight of Wotan, " the lord of the ravens," and fears for its life.) Siegfried enters in the foreground. The bird, he says, has led him well so far, but now it has flown away, and he must make his way alone to the rock. He is going towards the back when the Wanderer, who is still in the same position at the cave, accosts him, asking him what is the way of which he speaks. Siegfried turns round to him, and coming closer, tells him that he is seeking a rock, surrounded by flaming fire, where sleeps a woman who must waken to him.

Quietly the Wanderer interrogates him, and Siegfried tells him how he slew the Dragon, by the taste of its blood learned to understand the song of the birds, and then followed one of them hither. The Wanderer's questions take him further and further back in his story: he tells first of all of how he followed Mime, who had undertaken to teach him fear, then how he forged his own sword. Siegfried becomes a little impatient when the Wanderer asks him who made the mighty splinters from which the sword was forged He replies that he does not know; he knows only that the fragments would not have availed him had not the sword been shaped anew.

The Wanderer breaks into a good-humoured, approving laugh, and says, " That can I well believe! " The puzzled boy, becoming still more impatient, asks the old man to plague him no more with his questions, but if he knows the way to the rock, to show it to him, and if not, to talk no more.

Placidly the Wanderer advises him to be patient: " If I am old," he says, " that is a reason why thou shouldst honour me." Siegfried breaks out in scorn at this: all his life long his path has been barred by one old fellow whom lately he swept away; if the Wanderer holds him much longer with his chatter, let him have a care lest he share Mime's fate. Then going closer to the Wanderer he asks why he looks so strange — why he wears that great hat, and why it hangs so low over his face.

Still immovable, the Wanderer replies, " That is the wont of Wanderer when against the wind he goes." Inspecting him more closely, Siegfried finds that one eye is lacking, and hints that it may have been struck out by someone whose way the garrulous old man had barred; let him now take himself off, or soon he may find himself short of the other. The tranquil Wanderer answers him in words that the boy cannot understand: " With the one eye that for long I have lost, thou lookest thyself on the other that still is left me for sight."

The seeming foolishness of this reply moves Siegfried to loud laughter; then, once more becoming impatient, he orders the Wanderer to cease his chatter and show him the way. Softly and tenderly the Wanderer tells him not to scoff at and threaten one who loved his race of old, though once he scourged it in his wrath: " Thou whom I love so, all too fair one, wake not wrath in me now, to the ruin of thee and me! " The raging boy bids him move out of his path, for that way, he now knows, leads to the slumbering Brynhilde.

It has now become quite dark again. Wrathfully and commandingly the Wanderer bids Siegfried stand back, for he shall not find the way pointed out to him by the bird; it is his might that has bound the maid in slumber in the midst of the fire, and he who wakes her and wins her will make the Wanderer mightless for ever. The fire motive flames out in the orchestra as he points out to Siegfried the light on the rocky heights in the distance; this fire shall seize and consume the foolhardy boy if he persists in his quest.

Siegfried advancing farther, the Wanderer bars his way with his spear: " Hast thou no fear of the fire," he says, " at least shall my spear bar the path. Still holdeth my hand the haft of power; the sword thou dost bear was shattered once on this shaft; now once again be it broken on the everlasting spear! " Siegfried draws his sword: he has found then, he cries, his father's foe! Glorious vengeance is in his grasp; thus he shatters the spear with his sword! With one blow he hews the Wanderer's spear in two; there is a flash of lightning and a rumble of thunder, that quickly dies away. The fragments of the spear have fallen at the Wanderer's

feet; quietly picking them up and falling back he says, " Advance! I no more can stop thee! " and disappears in complete darkness.

Siegfried's attention is attracted by the increasing brightness of the fire-clouds. " Through fire will I fare to the bride! " he cries; " now at last shall I win me a dear comrade! " Placing his horn to his lips and sounding his call he plunged into the sea of fire, which has now swept down from the height of the foreground, and soon he becomes invisible.

While the scene is being changed the orchestra pours out a molten flood of tone, in which the themes of the Fire and of Siegfried's the Magic Ban and the Slumber motive (*Valkyrie,* No. 30), followed by that of Siegfried (*Valkyrie,* No. 25).

The setting of the final scene is precisely the same as that at the end of *The Valkyrie,* with Brynhilde lying asleep in her armour. Siegfried, coming from the back, appears on the summit of the cliff. He looks around him for some time in astonishment while the orchestra plays softly with the Sleep and other motives, the music giving a curious impression of clear air on a great height.

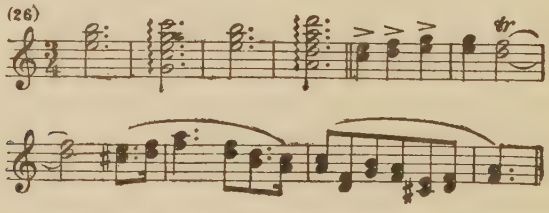
Looking into the wood at the side Siegfried sees a horse standing in deep sleep. Then his eye catches the glint of the bright sunlight on Brynhilde's armour, and coming forward and raising her shield he sees what he takes to be the figure of a warrior, Brynhilde's face being still mostly concealed by the helmet. He carefully loosens and removes this, and a mass of hair falls down; but he still believes that the sleeper is simply a man of great beauty. Unable to loosen the breastplate he cuts with his sword through the rings of mail on both sides, raises the breastplate and the greaves, and starts back in amazement and alarm with a cry of " That is no man! "

A new emotion flames through him; greatly distressed at this apparition of something that has never yet come within his experience, he cries, " On whom shall I call that he may help me? Mother! Mother! Remember me! " and then sinks, as if fainting, on Brynhilde's bosom. After a long silence he rises with a sigh, and, to the accompaniment of the ardent No. 23, he resolves to venture to waken the maiden, even though her eyes should blind him. " Can this be fear? " he asks as he listens to the unaccustomed

beating of his heart. From a sleeping woman he has at last learned fear, and to conquer it he must waken her.

More and more enchanted with her beauty he gives a despairing cry of "Awaken! Awaken! Holiest maid!" Then, as she seemingly does not hear him, he sinks, as if dying, on the sleeping figure, and with closed eyes presses his lips to hers.

The kiss awakens Brynhilde. Slowly rising to a sitting position, she raises her arms and gives a solemn greeting to the sky and earth that she sees once more:



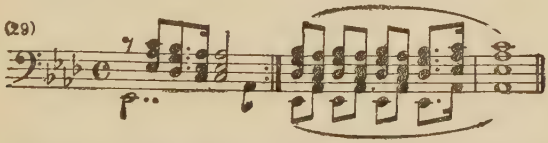
Then, to music that seems to be quivering with light and warm with the pulsing of a long-restrained energy, she hails the glorious sun. Who is the hero who has wakened her? she asks; and when she learns that it is Siegfried who has fought his way through the fire she pours out a new song of thankfulness to the gods.

A long duet follows between the pair, in which she tells him how he had been her care before he was born, for she divined the secret of Wotan that the god himself dared neither speak nor shape to thought, and how what possessed her then was love for the unborn Siegfried. Various new motives make their appearance from time to time, among the most important of which are that of Love's Greeting:

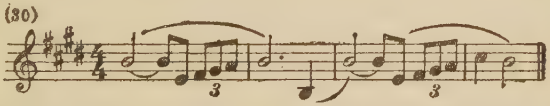
and that of Love's Rapture:

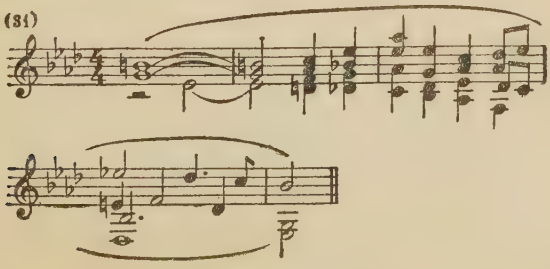
Sadness comes over Brynhilde as she gazes on her horse and her shield and helmet, and realises that she has lost her godhood and is now only a sorrowful woman awakened by a mortal man.

When Siegfried in his ardour tries to embrace her she springs up, repulses him with the strength of terror, and flies to the other side: "No god's touch have I known!" she cries. "Before the maiden low bent the heroes; holy came she from Valhalla. Woe's me! Woe for the shame, the pain, and the disgrace! For he who wakes me deals me this wound! He has broken byrnie and helm; Brynhilde am I no more!" At the mention of Valhalla the orchestra softly intones a phrase:

(29)

that, in *The Rhinegold,* figured at the end of the representative Valhalla motive, but that later will have a significance of its own.

Gradually, with loving words, Siegfried soothes her, and at last her expression shows that a sweet vision has arisen in her mind. As she turns a gentle gaze on him the strings give out very softly a new motive, that of Peace:

(30)

Another new motive appears immediately afterwards as Brynhilde hails Siegfried as the Treasure of the World, the Life of the Earth:

(31)

She implores him to leave her as untroubled as the reflection of his own face in the crystal brook — to love himself and leave her in peace, not strike his own one into the dust. But in the end his passion fires her too, and laughing wildly in her joy she cries that she loves him and if need be will go laughing down to death with him.

The horns give out a new motive, that of Love's Resolution:

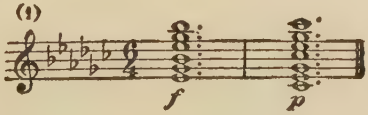
(32)

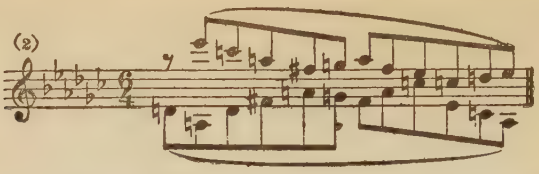
as the voices blend in a rapturous final duet, in which Brynhilde bids farewell to the glitter of Valhalla, that may now crumble to dust along with the glory and pomp of the gods, for henceforth over her head shines Siegfried's star. Siegfried hails the day that has brought him Brynhilde, laughter, and love, and at the end their voices unite in a cry of " Light of loving, laughing death! " Brynhilde throws herself into Siegfried's arms while the orchestra thunders out the theme of Love's Rapture (No. 28), followed by that of Siegfried in the trombones.

AS the first act alone of *The Twilight of the Gods* lasts two hours, and the whole opera runs to close on five hours of actual performance without reckoning the intervals, it is obviously necessary for cuts to be made on most occasions. Generally the opening scene is sacrificed, greatly to the damage of the inner dramatic idea.

Fate broods over the whole of this last evening of *The Ring*, and it is the weaving of the fates of gods and men that we witness in the opening scene. The weavers of Fate in the Scandinavian mythology are the Norns, who pass to each other the cord of Fate, which is made fast to a fir tree.

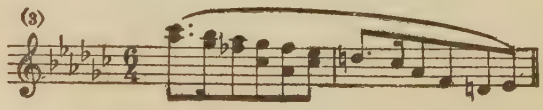
A brief orchestral prelude presents us first of all with the short motive to which Brynhilde, when awakened on her rock at the end of *Siegfried*, had greeted the world:



This is followed by a motive typical of the Norns, that is merely a slightly altered rhythmical version of the now familiar theme of Erda. The solemn motive of the Annunciation of Fate is next heard in the brass, to be succeeded by a new motive, that of the Weaving of Fate:

The scene is once more Brynhilde's rock, as at the close of *The Valkyrie* and *Siegfried,* but as the stage is almost completely dark we do not recognise any of the familiar objects. From the valley at the back comes the gleam of the fire.

We dimly descry the three Norns — tall women in long, veil-like, sombre draperies. The first, who is the oldest, lies in the foreground on the right, under a wide-spreading fir tree; the second, who is younger, is stretched out on a rock in front of the cave; while the third, who is the youngest, sits in the centre of the background on a rock at the edge of the peak.

During the conversation of the Norns a golden rope is passed at intervals from one to the other, and fastened in turn to the fir tree and the rock.

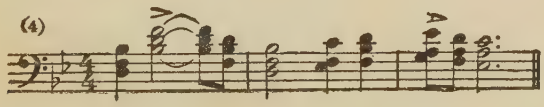
The first Norn tells how she once wove at the world ash tree, when a dauntless god came to drink at the spring near by, and left an eye in payment for a draught from the waters of wisdom; how Wotan then broke a great branch from the world ash tree and made a spear-shaft out of it; how, as time went on, the wound cankered the tree, that languished and died, while the water dried up in the spring. (Here we hear a new motive, that of the Twilight of the Gods):

The second Norn takes up the tale, telling how Wotan engraved runes of treaties on the shaft of the spear, and with it ruled the world; how a hero shattered the spear, and how Wotan then bade Valhalla's heroes cut in pieces the withered trunk and branches of the world ash tree.

From the third Norn we learn how Wotan now sits in state in Valhalla with the gods and the heroes: round the mighty castle is heaped up a great wall of the riven boughs of the world ash tree; and when fire shall seize upon the wood and ravage the glittering hall, then the doom of the gods is nigh, and they shall all go down into the dusk.

The tale goes on that Wotan, by the magic of his spear, found the wandering Loge and fixed him as a fire about the rock. " Knowest thou what now shalt be? " asks the second Norn, and the third Norn replies prophetically, " The broken spear-shaft's piercing splinters Wotan strikes to the depths of the burning one's breast: furious fire flares from the glow; this Wotan hurls at the world ash tree's wall of boughs about Valhalla."

The Norns would fain know when this shall come about, but the night wanes, and they can no more see or feel the strands of the rope. A terrible sight mocks and maddens them; the Rhinegold, that was once robbed by Alberich — what came from that? The second Norn cries out that the jagged edge of the rock is cutting through the rope: " the web wavers and tears; from grief and greed rises the Nibelung's Ring; a vengeful curse gnaws at the sundering strands." Further in the Book of Fate the Norns cannot read, for the rope breaks. Starting up in terror they take hold of the broken pieces, and, going to the centre of the stage, bind their bodies together with them, crying, " The end this of our wisdom! The world hears us wise ones no more! Descend to Erda! "

They vanish, to the accompaniment of a last reminiscence of the theme of the Annunciation of Fate in the orchestra. Day dawns, and as the red glow increases the fire in the valley at the back grows fainter. Softly the horns give out the theme of Siegfried as hero:

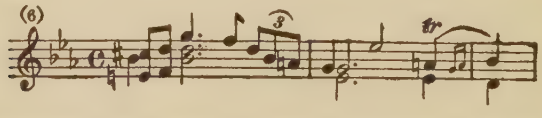


followed by the Brynhilde motive in the clarinet:

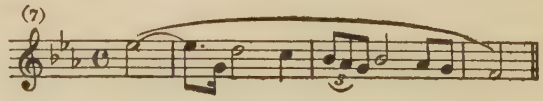
This last is developed and carried up higher and higher in the orchestral registers, till at last it bursts forth in glory as full daylight comes upon the scene.

Immediately afterwards the Siegfried theme thunders out in all the power of the brass, followed by that of the Valkyries (*Valkyrie*, No. 17), as Siegfried, fully armed, enters from the cave, accompanied by Brynhilde, who is leading her horse Grane by the bridle. She is about to send her hero forth to deeds of glory, after having endowed him with all the wisdom the gods had taught her. He is now her master, having overcome the Valkyrie she once was and wakened her as a woman; she is weak in wisdom, she says, but strong in will and rich in love.

The motive of Heroic Love:



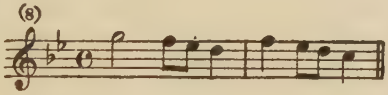
which appears at this point, is heard again when Siegfried assures her that if he has learned no other wisdom he has at least laid to heart eternal love for, and remembrance of, Brynhilde. The theme of Love's Greeting, to which, in the duet at the end of the preceding opera, Siegfried and Brynhilde poured out their ecstasy:

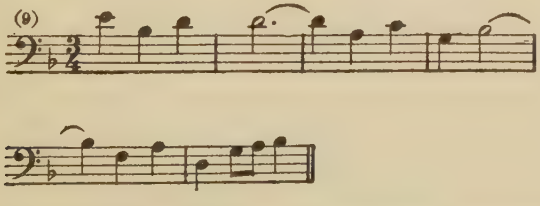


reappears as she speaks of the hero who wakened her and became the lord of her life; and various other motives with which we are already familiar are heard again as she exhorts him never to forget her and the pledges of love they have exchanged.

If Siegfried must now leave her, he says, in the ward of the watchful fire, he will give her, in return for all her runes of wisdom,

a Ring, which he now draws from his finger and places on hers. In this Ring lies the whole virtue of the deeds of valour he has wrought from the time when he dealt out death to the Dragon; now it shall be the token of his love, and its strength be Brynhilde's guard.

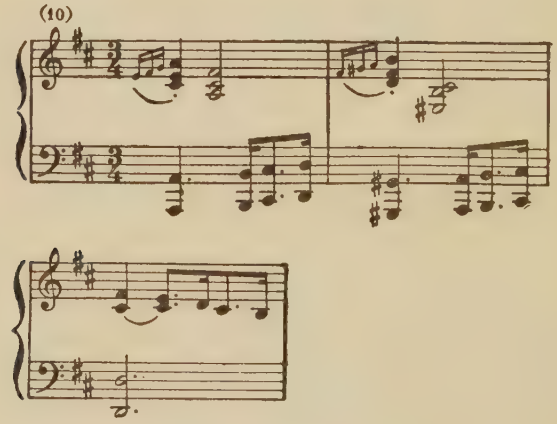
In exchange she gives him Grane, who, like her, has lost his former supernatural quality, and can no longer ride over the clouds through thunder and lightning, but will carry him anywhere on earth, even through fire itself. To the accompaniment of the Freedom motive:

he vows that with Brynhilde's horse and Brynhilde's shield he is no longer Siegfried, but Brynhilde's arm; endowed with her spirit, he is Siegfried and Brynhilde in one. To a last rapturous outpouring of No. 8 the pair hail each other in a final ecstasy, after which Siegfried quickly leads the horse down the rocks, Brynhilde following him.

A long orchestral interlude follows, to allow of a change of scene; this is the excerpt known in the concert-room as "Siegfried's Rhine Journey." Siegfried, of course, is from this point onwards invisible to the spectator, but from the gestures and the expression of Brynhilde, who stands on the slope following him down the valley with her eyes, we can trace his course in our imagination. After various soundings of his horn-call, which she answers with a joyous smile, we hear the motive of Love's Resolution:

given out in the full strength of the orchestra. At this point the curtain falls, but the music continues. The horn-call is combined

with a variant of the Loge motive: then comes the great upward-surging theme of the Rhine (*Rhinegold*, No. 1), followed in turn by the Song of the Rhinemaidens and the motive of the Ring, to which succeed the motives of Renunciation, the Rhinegold, and Servitude.

Towards the end the music, by a transition so gradual as to be almost imperceptible, has lost in pace, slackened in vitality, and darkened in colour; the youthful joyousness and morning freshness of the preceding scene have died out of it, and Fate seems to be brooding over the drama once more.

By the most natural means imaginable the music at last merges into a fresh motive, that of Hagen:

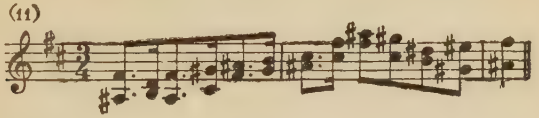


as the curtain rises, showing us the hall of the Gibichungs on the Rhine. The hall is entirely open at the back, where we see an open shore extending to the river.

(The Gibichungs are the children of Gibich; their king is Gunther, who has a sister, Gutrune, and a half-brother, Hagen, the last-named being the product of a loveless union between Alberich and Grimhilde, the mother of Gunther and Gutrune. Hagen, in keeping with his Nibelung origin, is dark-complexioned, gloomy, and sinister.)

When we first catch sight of the three new characters, they are seated at a table with drinking utensils on it. A new motive, that of the Gibichungs:

(11)



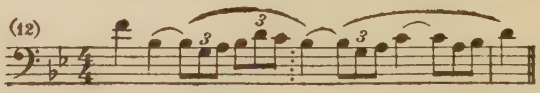
is heard as Gunther asks his half-brother how it stands with the fame of Gibich on the Rhine. He puts aside Hagen's assurance that all are filled with envy at the king's fame and fortune. Not at all is he to be envied, he says; rather should he envy Hagen, for though Gunther was the first-born, Hagen is the possessor of wisdom.

Hagen, being importuned again, tells him the truth: Gunther's fame is not so glorious as it might be, for there are great things he has not yet won him: he is still without a wife, and Gutrune without a husband. For the increase of his fame he should win a woman of whom Hagen knows, the noblest in the world, whose home is on a rock surrounded by fire. But Gunther may not fight through that fire; that deed has been reserved for a stronger man, Siegfried the Wälsung, whom Hagen would like to see wedded to Gutrune. Hagen tells the others of the great deeds of Siegfried — how he slew the Dragon and made himself possessor of the Hoard, and with it the lordship of the world; only he can win through the fire to Brynhilde.

Gunther rises angrily at this, and striding agitatedly about the hall asks Hagen why he thus spurs him to vain desire. Without moving from his seat, Hagen stops Gunther with a mysterious sign: and we hear the Tarnhelm motive in the orchestra as he asks, " But if Siegfried bring home the bride to thee, *then* were not Brynhilde thine? " He unfolds his plan to the still restless and fretted Gunther: Siegfried would win Brynhilde for Gunther were he himself in love with Gutrune, and that could be brought about by means of a magic potion that would make the hero forget that he had seen any woman before her. Gunther praises Grimhilde

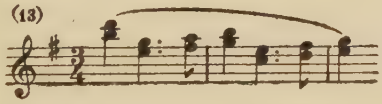
for having given him such a brother, while the gentle Gutrune murmurs, " Would that Siegfried I might see! "

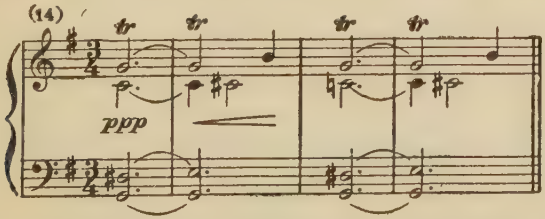
Gunther is just asking how the hero may be found when a horn is heard from the background; a little later this develops into the characteristic horn-call of Siegfried (*Siegfried,* No. 3), and Hagen, who has gone to the shore and is looking down the stream, calls back that he sees a vessel approaching carrying a man and a horse; and none but Siegfried, the vanquisher of the Dragon, could with so easy a stroke drive the boat against the stream. Hagen hails the hero through his hollowed hands, and soon Siegfried appears in the boat. He fastens it to the shore and springs on land with his horse, where he is greeted by Gunther and Hagen, Gutrune, from her seat at the table, gazing on him in wonder and admiration. As Siegfried sets foot on the land the trombones give out, with the maximum of their power, the terrific theme of the Curse.

Siegfried, standing calmly by the boat, leaning on his horse, greets Gunther courteously, says he has heard his praises sung beyond the Rhine, and bids him fight him or be his friend. Gunther, to the accompaniment of the Friendship theme:

gives him a fair welcome, and Hagen leads Grane away to the back of the hall, Siegfried gazing thoughtfully after them. At a gesture from Hagen, Gutrune retires, unobserved by Siegfried, through a door on the left into her chamber; Gunther then brings Siegfried forward into the hall, where, in the ancient fashion, he places himself and all he has at the service of his guest. For himself, says Siegfried, he has neither field nor folk nor father's house to offer in return; his whole birthright is his body; but he has a sword, shaped by himself, and that shall be the witness to his oath of friendship.

Hearing Siegfried's disclaimer of wealth, Hagen, who has now returned and is standing behind Siegfried, remarks that rumour names him as the lord of the Nibelung's Hoard. The unsophisti-

cated hero, it seems, has forgotten this; so little does he prize the booty that he has left it, he says, in the cavern with the body of the Dragon who once watched over it. One thing alone he took away with him — here he points to the woven metal work that is hanging at his belt — and of that he does not know the worth. Hagen, however, declares this to be the Tarnhelm, that will disguise its wearer as he wills, or take him in the twinkling of an eye wherever he may wish to be.

Was there anything else Siegfried took from the Hoard? "A Ring," Siegfried replies, "and that is now worn by a woman." "Brynhilde!" ejaculates Hagen aside. He opens Gutrune's door, and the maiden enters to the gentle motive that is so descriptive of her tender, yielding, love-desiring nature:

She bears a filled drinking-horn, which she offers to Siegfried, welcoming him as guest in Gibich's house.

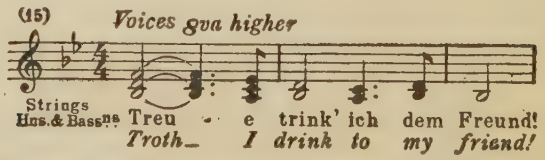
He takes it from her courteously, and, with his thoughts evidently turned inwards, pledges Brynhilde in undying love and remembrance. But the draught has had mixed with it the subtle essences of which Hagen spoke; the Magic Deceit that lies in it is symbolised in one of Wagner's most subtly expressive motives:

Some transformations of the Gutrune motive, growing in ardour from bar to bar, give us a hint of the working of the potion on Siegfried; he returns the horn to Gutrune, who, shamed and confused, lowers her eyes before him. His blood already fired with love for her, he asks Gunther, in a trembling voice, the name of

his sister, seizes her hands impetuously, and asks her if she like her proud brother, would disdain the offer of himself were he to make it. Gutrune encounters Hagen's look; she humbly bows her head, then, with a gesture indicating her feeling of her own unworthiness, leaves the hall with unsteady steps, Siegfried, closely watched by Hagen and Gunther, following her with his eyes as if bewitched.

Has Gunther a wife? he asks. "Not yet," replies the Gibichung: he has set his heart on one whom he can never make his own; her home is on a towering rock, surrounded by fire; and only he who breaks through the wall of flame shall win Brynhilde for wife. Siegfried, in astonishment, repeats each of Gunther's sentences after him, as if trying, by an intense effort, to recapture something that should be familiar to him; but at the mention of Brynhilde's name he shows by a final gesture that the memory quite evades him.

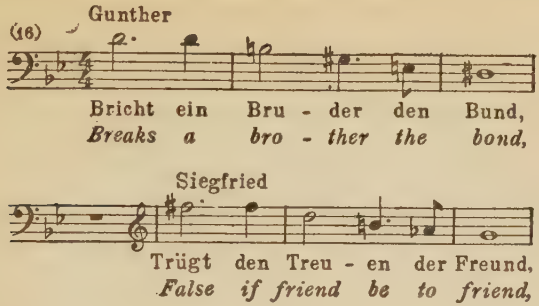
Coming to himself out of his dreamlike state he turns gaily to Gunther and declares that he, who does not fear the fire, will win the bride for the King if he himself may have Gutrune; he will gain access to the rock by means of the Tarnhelm, changing his form into that of Gunther.

The theme of the Curse has already been heard in the horns during the scene in which Siegfried followed Gutrune with his eyes, and now it is heard again in the tuba as the two men prepare to take the oath of Blood-brotherhood. Hagen having filled a drinking-horn with fresh wine, he holds it out to Siegfried and Gunther, each of whom cuts his arm with his sword and lets the blood fall into the mouth of the horn. Then each lays two fingers on the horn, which is still held by Hagen between them, and swears Blood-brotherhood to the other:



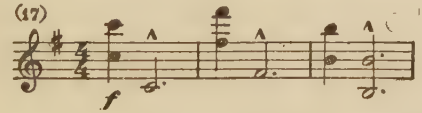
There follows upon this a solemn passage:

(16)


Gunther
Bricht ein Bru - der den Bund,
Breaks a bro - ther the bond,
Siegfried
Trügt den Treu - en der Freund,
False if friend be to friend,

in which each speaks of the Atonement that shall be due if either fails to keep the oath: " Breaks a brother the bond, false if friend be to friend, what in drops today we two have drunken, in streams unceasing shall flow; so shall the traitor atone! "

Gunther and Siegfried drink from the horn in turns, the orchestra giving out the motive of the Oath of Fidelity, which is best quoted here in the expanded form it assumes later:

(17)

Its salient characteristics are the fall of an octave and the clinching effect of the second note of each bar.

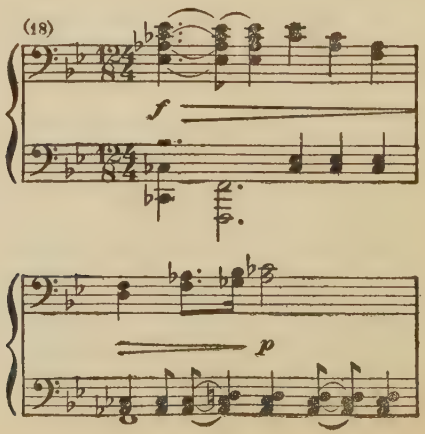
Siegfried having drunk, he holds out the horn to Hagen, who smites it into pieces with his sword as Gunther and Siegfried clasp hands. Siegfried demands why Hagen has not shared in the oath, and the sinister one explains that his blood, being stubborn and cold and not as noble as theirs, would only poison their drink. Gunther bids Siegfried take no heed of the gloomy creature, and the hero, turning to Gunther again, unfolds his plans. They two will go down the Rhine together in the boat, and in this, when they reach the mountain, Gunther will hide while Siegfried conquers Brynhilde and brings her to him.

They place their weapons in the boat, and just as Siegfried pushes off into the middle of the stream Gutrune appears at the door of her chamber and, learning from Hagen the destination of

the pair, sighs out the desire of her heart that Siegfried may be hers, and returns within in great agitation.

The boat is soon lost to view. Hagen, who has taken up his spear and shield, sits down with his back against a post at the entrance to the hall, and there, quite motionless, sings that he will watch and ward the hall while the others, unknown to themselves, go to perform his secret will and bring him, perhaps, the Ring. "Ye sons of freedom," he cries, "lusty companions, laugh as ye sail on your way! Base though ye deem him, ye both shall serve the Nibelung's son!"

The curtain falls, and during the change of scene the orchestra reviews a number of the motives with which we are already acquainted, including the Ring, Siegfried's horn-call, the typical Siegfried motive, the Servitude motive, and various motives associated with Brynhilde and Siegfried. Wagner's musical and dramatic genius was at this time at its height, and we find him now hitting off his characters with the minimum of notes — sometimes in a single stroke — as well as giving the subtlest new meanings to the old motives by slight changes in the harmony, and combining themes in such a way that of themselves they tell a story or paint a scene.

For example, in the early part of this orchestral interlude, we have the following:

The upper melody is the motive of the Ring; the syncopated rhythm in the lower stave is that of the Annihilation motive associated with Alberich (*Rhinegold*, No. 24); while in the first two notes in the lower stave we have the sinister motive of Hagen given out by the double basses and tuba.

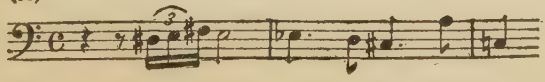
When the curtain rises again we see Brynhilde's rock once more; Brynhilde is sitting at the entrance to the cave, thoughtfully contemplating Siegfried's ring, which, as if lost in blissful memories, she covers with kisses.

While she is absorbed in her happiness, thunder is heard, accompanied by a lightning flash, and a dark thunder-cloud is seen approaching the rock; Brynhilde recognises the old familiar sound of a steed sweeping like a storm through the air. Outside is heard Waltraute's voice calling her from a distance, and soon Waltraute enters, with anxiety written on her face. Brynhilde, in delight, asks her for news of Valhalla: does Wotan's heart turn to his child again? With no thought for anything but her own happiness she runs over the story of her wakening by Siegfried, and only gradually does she become aware of Waltraute's gloom and agitation.

In a long and magnificent monologue known as Waltraute's Narration the Valkyrie tells her sister what it is that has brought her hither. Since Brynhilde was lost to Wotan, she says, Wotan has sent the Valkyries out no more to the battlefield to bring him heroes. He journeyed through the world as Wanderer, and one day returned home holding in his hand the broken fragments of his spear, shattered by a hero's sword.

With a silent sign he sent the warriors out to hew the world ash tree in pieces, which he bade them build into a great rampart about Valhalla. Then he assembled the gods and heroes, and there he now sits, mute and grave, the spear's fragments in his grasp, while the gods gaze at him awestruck and spellbound. Round his knees the trembling Valkyries entwine themselves (here we hear in the orchestra a motive expressive of the Calamity that is to fall upon the gods):

(19)



Then, to music of the most soul-searching beauty, Waltraute describes how Wotan's looks grew soft as he remembered Brynhilde, and sighing in his dream he whispered, " If ever the river-maidens win back the Ring from Brynhilde again, from the Curse's load released were gods and world! "

The words sank deep into Waltraute, who stole forth alone, mounted her horse, and flew to Brynhilde, to implore her to take pity upon them all and end the grief of the gods by returning the Ring to the Rhinemaidens again. The outraged Brynhilde, when at last she understands, refuses to part with the Ring, the seal of Siegfried's love for her; it is more to her than Valhalla's rapture, more than the fame of the eternal gods, for out of the gleam of the gold there sings perpetually to her the ecstatic refrain, " Siegfried loves me! Siegfried loves me! "

She dismisses Waltraute with a message to the council of the gods: " While life doth last will I love, from love they never will win me: fall first in ruins Valhalla's splendour and pride! " Waltraute, after trying to shake her resolution, gives a terrible cry of despair and rushes away, storm-clouds and tempest rising from the wood as she departs.

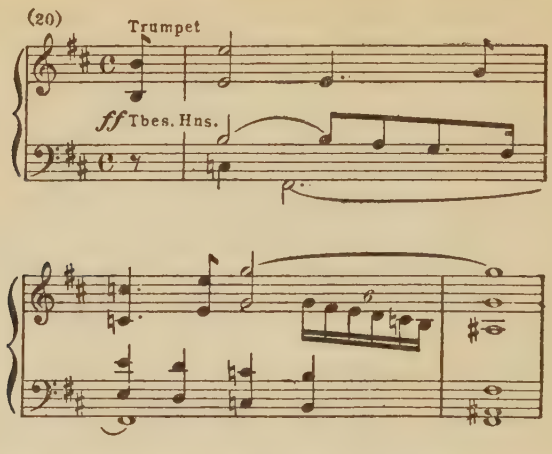
Evening has fallen, and the light of the fire below the rock gradually becomes brighter. At first Brynhilde is happy in the thought of its guardianship; then she becomes aware that the flames are leaping and seething more madly than usual. Through the swirling mass of the fire music a horn behind the scenes gives out the theme of Siegfried (*Valkyrie,* No. 25), followed by Siegfried's horn-call, and Brynhilde starts up in delight to welcome the returning hero.

The flames flare up and then immediately draw back, henceforth being visible only in the depths below. Siegfried has come through the fire, but as he steps upon the rock he wears the form of Gunther; on his head is the Tarnhelm, which conceals the upper part of his face, leaving only the eyes free. Verbal description can convey no sense of the horror of the moment in the theatre; it is the most blood-curdling scene in the whole range of opera.

The dazed Brynhilde asks who it is that has thus forced a way through the fire. To the accompaniment first of all of the motive of Magic Deceit (No. 14), then of the Gibichungs (No. 11), then of the Tarnhelm, Siegfried, in a feigned voice that is deeper than his own, tells her that a wooer has come whom the fire could not affright; he has won her for wife, and she must follow him where he leads. He is a Gibichung, he says, in answer to her questions, and his name is Gunther. The trapped woman gives a despairing cry of "Wotan! Thou vengeful, pitiless god! Now my sentence its meaning shows: all shame and sorrow thou sendest to me!"

The sombre motive of Hagen dominates the music as Siegfried, springing down from the rock and drawing nearer to Brynhilde, tells her that that night she must be wedded to him in her cave. She summons up her last strength to stretch out threateningly towards him the finger that bears the Ring, bidding him stand back from her, for this is her sure guard. It is Gunther's, as husband's right, replies Siegfried, and seizes her; she wrenches herself free, flies, is caught again, and after a violent struggle he grasps her by the hand and tears the Ring from her finger. With a violent shriek she collapses into his arms as if broken, and her unconscious look meets Siegfried's eyes. He lets her fainting body sink down on to the stone bench at the entrance to the cave, and orders her, as Gunther's bride, to point him the way.

With an imperious gesture he drives the exhausted woman before him, and as she totters into the cave he draws his sword and, in his natural voice, cries, "Now, Nothung, witness thou that pure my wooing was! That troth I may keep with my brother, bar thou me from Gunther's bride!" He follows Brynhilde into the cave, and the curtain falls.

In the last page or two of the long act Wagner's genius for concentration is seen at its finest. There is an especially tremendous passage at the point where Siegfried draws the sword that is to separate him in honour from the bride of Gunther: first we hear the incisive motive of the Oath of Fidelity (No. 17); then comes this:

in which we have in the trumpet a changed version of the Sword motive, in the upper part of the lower stave the Treaty motive in the horns and trombones, and in the bass the threatening two-notes theme of Hagen.

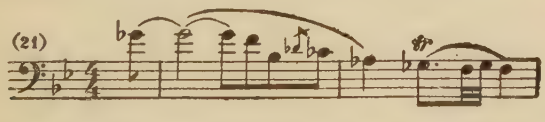
Throughout the brief orchestral introduction to the second act and the whole of the first scene there runs the syncopated rhythm characteristic of the Annihilation motive; in the introduction we hear also from time to time the gloomy motive of Hagen.

When the curtain rises we see the hall of the Gibichungs from another angle. The open entrance is now on the right; on the left is the bank of the Rhine, with rocky heights in the distance. It is night; Hagen, his arm round his spear and his shield by his side, sits asleep, leaning against a post of the hall. A sudden flood of moonlight reveals to us not only Hagen but the head and shoulders of Alberich, who is crouching before his son with his arms on the latter's knees.

In the dialogue that ensues, Hagen speaks softly and always without moving, so that although his eyes are open he appears all the while to be sleeping. The Nibelung appeals feverishly to his son to work for him against their enemies; the power of the gods is broken, he says; soon they will sink to ruin, and then the world shall be Alberich's. The Ring has passed into the possession of the

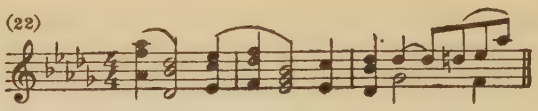
Wälsung boy, over whom the Curse has no power, for he does not know the worth of the Ring, and so makes no use of it for his own ends; he lives only for love. Hagen must get the Ring, for if, at Brynhilde's advice, Siegfried should restore it to the Rhine-maidens, the gold and the power which it can confer will be for ever lost to the Nibelungs. It is to achieve this vengeance that Alberich has bred Hagen and instilled hatred in him.

Hagen's reply is that from his mother he indeed got his stout heart, yet may he not thank her that she was caught by Alberich's craft, for being the Nibelung's son he is old too soon, pale and wan, ever joyless, hating the happy. But he bids his father remain in peace, for he will win him the Ring; and Alberich disappears slowly in a gradually deepening shadow, reiterating anxiously, " Be true, Hagen, my son! Trusty hero! Be true! Be true! "

Like the great dramatist he is, Wagner lets us see the two characters not as they appear to us — not as the villains of the piece, that is to say — but as they appear to themselves. Alberich is wholly justified in his own eyes, especially after the injury that Wotan did him; and his hunger for the Ring is as vital an expression of his own being as Siegfried's longing for love is of his. In the course of the dialogue a new motive has made its appearance, that of Murder:

We shall meet with it again later, when the tragedy is working up to the climactic point of Siegfried's death.

Day dawns, and Hagen gives a slight start, as if awakening. Siegfried enters suddenly from behind a bush on the shore; he is in his own form again, but the Tarnhelm is still on his head; he takes it off and hangs it at his belt as he comes forward. The others, he tells Hagen, are following in the boat. He asks if Gutrune is awake, and Hagen calls her from the hall. From this point onward the Gutrune motive undergoes several modifications, one of the most typical of which may be quoted here:

(22)



although it does not appear till later in the scene.

Siegfried and Gutrune give each other gracious greeting, and he tells her how he has mastered Brynhilde for her brother, and so won Gutrune for himself. He assures her that though Brynhilde submitted to her lord till the morn, "Siegfried was here by Gutrune!" for though Brynhilde lay beside him, "between east and west is north," he says, pointing to his sword; "so near was Brynhilde, and so far." In the morning he had taken her through the dying fire to the valley below, where, by the magic of the Tarnhelm, Gunther was wafted to them and swift as thought stood there in Siegfried's stead.

Far away down the river Hagen sees a sail, and Gutrune tells him to call the vassals together to the hall for the wedding. With the wedding is associated a new variation upon the Gutrune motive:

(23)

Siegfried gives Gutrune his hand and goes with her into the hall, while Hagen, ascending a rock in the background, blows lustily on his discordant cow-horn and hoarsely summons the vassals.

His sinister joviality is expressed in a theme that first of all appears in the bassoons:

(24)

First singly, then in pairs, the armed vassals come hurrying along the various paths across the rocks and gather on the shore in front of the hall. Then, for the first and only time in *The Ring*, we have a chorus, and however much it may savour, as is sometimes com-

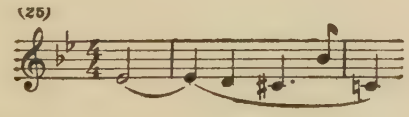
plained, of " opera " rather than of " musical drama," it is undeniably welcome not only as a relief from the constant succession of single voices, but for itself, for it is a superb expression of barbaric gaiety. Orchestrally it has (if the adjectives may be permitted) a peculiarly rough, hoarse colouring that is thoroughly appropriate to the scene and the singers.

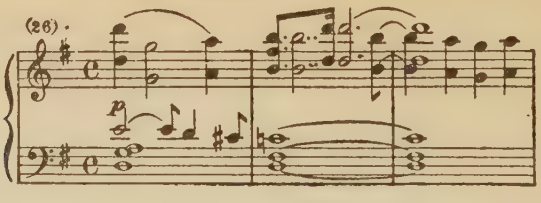
The first thought of the vassals is that they have been summoned to guard the hall against a foe, but Hagen explains to them that they have been brought there to welcome the king and his bride. They are to slaughter steers on Wotan's altar, a boar for Froh, a goat for Donner, and sheep for Fricka, that she may smile on the marriage. Then from their women they are to take the drinking-horns filled with mead and wine, and carouse till they fall like logs — all to win the favour of the gods for the marriage. The savage vassals burst into ringing laughter, and, to the strain of No. 24, sing the praises of " Hagen, the grim one," who has now become a bridal herald!

Becoming serious again, Hagen sends the vassals to greet the arriving pair, and tells them to serve their lady royally; " if she be wronged, swift be your vengeance! " Gunther and Brynhilde arrive amid great excitement and step ashore from the boat, the vassals arranging themselves respectfully to greet them. Gunther leads Brynhilde ceremoniously by the hand and presents her to the vassals, who shout and clash their weapons together; she is very pale and her eyes are lowered.

As Gunther and Brynhilde near the hall, from which Siegfried and Gutrune have come forth accompanied by women, we hear in the bassoons a new motive, that of the Covenant of Vengeance:

(25)



which will become of great significance later. The Gutrune motive takes on another and still more exquisite form:

as Gunther greets the other pair: " two happy bridals bless we together," he says, " Brynhilde and Gunther, Gutrune and Siegfried! "

At the last of these names Brynhilde raises her eyes and perceives Siegfried; her gaze remains fixed on him in stunned amazement. All, including Gunther, from whom Brynhilde has torn her violently trembling hand, look at her in blank perplexity, and the vassals softly ask themselves what the meaning of this can be.

Siegfried, who, we have to remember, has had the memory of his own association with Brynhilde taken from him by Hagen's potion, calmly advances a few steps towards her and presents to her Gutrune, " Gunther's gentle sister, won by me, as thou by him! " " I? Gunther? " cries Brynhilde vehemently; " thou liest! " She staggers and seems about to fall, and is supported by Siegfried, who is next to her. She looks up to him feebly, unable to understand why he does not know her. Siegfried calls Gunther to tend his wife, and just then Brynhilde, seeing the Ring on his outstretched finger, gives a terrible cry. Hagen, knowing that the crisis is at hand, comes from the background and tells the vassals to listen intently to this woman's words.

Trying to master her agitation, Brynhilde, pointing to the Ring, tells Siegfried that it should be worn of rights by Gunther, and bids the latter take it from Siegfried. Gunther does not understand this, nor Brynhilde's later question, " Where hidest thou the Ring that from my hand thou torest? " Greatly perplexed, he takes refuge in silence, and Brynhilde, breaking out into a violent rage, proclaims the truth to all: it was Siegfried, the treacherous thief, who wrenched the Ring from her! All look at Siegfried, who, as if

bemused, is contemplating the Ring, which he says no woman gave him, for he won it with his own sword in combat at Neidhöhle.

Stepping between them, Hagen asks her if she knows the Ring in truth, for if it is the one that Gunther wrested from her then it is his, and Siegfried must have won it by craft, and the traitor must now atone.

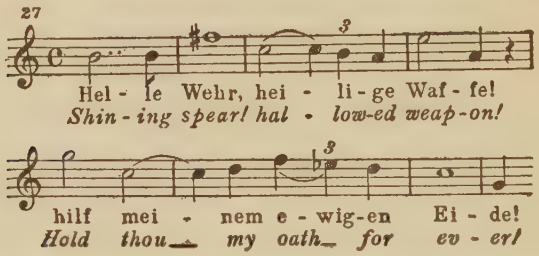
The bewildered and maddened Brynhilde cries out shame and deceit and betrayal upon Siegfried, and bitterly asks the gods if this sorrow that has come upon her was part of their punishing decree. She cries out to them to grant her a vengeance greater than any the world has yet known. Gunther implores her to calm herself, but the angry woman waves him aside, declaring that he as well as she has been betrayed. "Hearken to me all," she cries, "not his, but this man's wife" — pointing to Siegfried — "am I!"

Siegfried still does not understand. The memory of his union with Brynhilde having vanished, he takes her charge of betrayal to refer only to the night he spent with her in the cave in the guise of Gunther; and of that he is guiltless, he says, for had he not sworn Blood-brotherhood with the king? Did not his sword lie between him and Brynhilde then?

The episode immediately following has been the subject of a good deal of misunderstanding, that cannot be said to have been cleared up quite satisfactorily. Brynhilde gives Siegfried the lie: well she knows the sword, she says, and well she knows the sheath also, and in its sheath on the wall the sword rested when its master conquered her love. One's first assumption on hearing this is that she is deliberately lying in order to arouse the others' vengeance against Siegfried, and one cannot help experiencing a slight alienation of sympathy from her.

The explanation seems to be, however, that she is referring to her *first* meeting with Siegfried, for she does not associate him with the second one, in which he bore the semblance of Gunther. The men, of course, take her words in their literal sense, both they and Gunther believing that Siegfried has played the king false. Even Gutrune for a moment doubts her hero, and calls upon

him to bear witness that Brynhilde is speaking falsely. Siegfried declares himself willing to answer on oath.

The vassals form a ring round Siegfried and Hagen; the latter holds out his spear, upon the point of which Siegfried lays two fingers of his right hand as he offers up his life to the spear if Brynhilde's words be true and he betrayed his brother:

He has no sooner finished than Brynhilde, striding furiously into the midst of them, wrenches Siegfried's hand from the spear and seizes the point with her own hand. Siegfried's oath is false, she swears, and may the spear point deal him death!

Siegfried, unable to stand her frenzy, puts it down to the working of some demon within her, and advises Gunther to give her time to rest and compose herself. The Tarnhelm, he thinks, may have hidden only half of his face; but anyhow he has won her for Gunther, and her woman's spite will soon be at an end. Turning again to the vassals and the women he urges them to give themselves up to the joys of the wedding. Throwing his arm gaily round Gutrune he draws her away with him to the hall, and the women and the vassals follow him, slaves to his charm and infected by his gaiety.

On the stage only Brynhilde, Gunther, and Hagen remain. Gunther, in deep shame and dejection, sits on one side and covers his face; Brynhilde, standing in the foreground, looks sadly for some time after Siegfried and Gutrune, and then lets her head droop.

The long silence of the characters, that is filled expressively by the orchestra, is broken at last by Brynhilde, who, as if to herself,

asks what evil power it can be that has woven this misfortune about them; then, her rage mastering her again, she cries wildly, "Who will bring me now the sword wherewith I may sever my bond?" Hagen comes close to her and tells her that *he* will wreak vengeance for her on Siegfried. She turns on him with a bitter laugh: one flash from the hero's eyes, she says, one glance such as gleamed through the helm, shedding its glory on her, and fear would strike through Hagen's heart; his spear will be impotent unless he can back it by something stronger than its own strength.

Well he knows Siegfried's unconquerable might, replies Hagen; but cannot she, out of her wisdom, whisper to him how he may overcome him? Alas! she replies, in her love for him she wove her magic so closely about him that nothing can wound him — in battle, that is to say, for knowing that he would never turn his back upon a foe, she has set no spell there. "And there," says Hagen in triumph, "there striketh my spear!"

He turns quickly to Gunther and exhorts him to master himself, but the king, starting up passionately, cries shame and woe upon himself as the most wretched of all living. Brynhilde taunts the weakling with hiding cravenly behind the hero, and the maddened king cries to Hagen to help him save his honour. "No help from brain, no help from hand," answers Hagen; "there helps but — Siegfried's death!"

Gunther recoils with horror at the words, and the solemn No. 15 is heard in the orchestra as he cries in his anguish, "Blood-brotherhood I swore with him!" The bond, urges Hagen, has been broken by Siegfried, and only his blood can atone. Brynhilde cries out in her intolerable pain that while Siegfried betrayed only Gunther, she has been betrayed by them all. All the blood of the world could not wash out their guilt to her, but as to her vengeance, one man's death alone can glut that: Siegfried must die!

Insidiously Hagen reminds his brother that Siegfried's death will bring him the Ring, that coveted Ring that was once the Nibelung's; and Gunther, sighing deeply, consents to the deed, though he is sorry for the gentle Gutrune, who so truly loves

Siegfried; "What were we worth in her eyes," he asks, "with her husband's blood on our hands?"

The mention of Gutrune's name converts Brynhilde into a fury again; it is for Gutrune and her magic that Siegfried has betrayed her! Once more Hagen has a plan; if her hero's death will grieve Gutrune, let her not know how it came about; on the morrow they will go hunting, and a boar's tusk can let out Siegfried's life. So shall it be, the others decide, Brynhilde thinking only of her vengeance upon Siegfried and Gutrune, Gunther welcoming the opportunity to wipe out his shame, Hagen gloating over the prospect of gaining possession of the Ring and the Hoard.

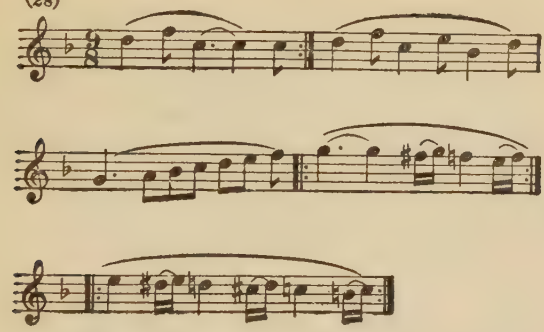
Once more we hear the Gutrune motive in the orchestra as Gunther and Brynhilde, turning towards the hall, are met by the outcoming bridal procession. Siegfried is carried by the men on a shield, Gutrune on a chair; boys and maidens, strewing flowers, run in front of them, while in the background the vassals and the women bring sacrificial beasts and instruments to the altar. The women invite Brynhilde to accompany them; Gutrune also beckons to her with a friendly smile, but Brynhilde only stares blankly at her. Hagen urges her on to Gunther, who takes her hand. The king himself is lifted by the men on to a shield, and as the procession moves towards the heights the curtain falls, the orchestra giving out in the final bars the darkly suggestive Hagen theme once more, followed by the motive of the Covenant of Vengeance.

The opening scene of the last act of the great drama is set in a wild, wooded valley on the Rhine, which is seen flowing in the background past a steep cliff. Siegfried is out hunting with Gunther and Hagen and the others, and apparently the Rhinemaidens are awaiting his coming. Before the curtain rises we hear, behind the scenes, Siegfried's horn-call, followed by the sound of other horns, some in the far distance, some nearer. Interspersed with these hunting sounds are the theme of the Rhine (*Rhinegold*, No. 2), and hints of the melody of the Rhinemaidens that will be heard a little later from the maidens themselves.

When the curtain rises, Woglinde, Wellgunde, and Flosshilde are

swimming in the water, circling as if in a dance. Wagner gives them an enchanting new melody to sing:

(28)



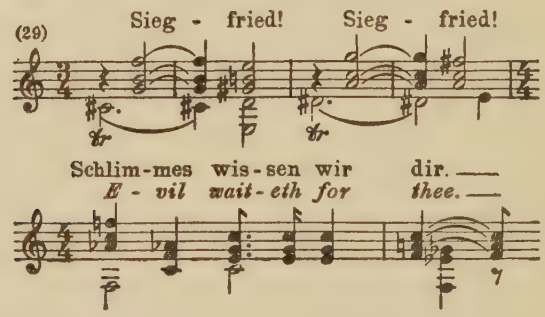
as they greet the sunlight and once more lament the loss of the shining, innocent gold. Horns and their echoes are heard again in the distance, and the Rhinemaidens, splashing about joyously in the water, call upon the sunlight to send them soon the hero who shall restore the gold to them.

Once more Siegfried's horn is heard, and the three Rhinemaidens dive swiftly to take counsel together. While they are away, Siegfried appears on the cliff, fully armed: he has lost both his quarry and his way. The Rhinemaidens rise to the surface again, and, resuming their dance, accost him teasingly. He looks at them with a smile: perhaps it was they, he asks, who lured away from him the shaggy brute he was hunting; if he is their lover, he leaves him to them.

The maidens, laughing merrily, ask what he will give them if they should restore his quarry. His hands are empty today, he answers, but let them say what they would have of him. They demand the Ring that gleams on his finger, but this he refuses them: to win it he slew a mighty Dragon, and shall he now part with it for a paltry bearskin? They call him mean; he should be freer with his gifts to maidens! Were he to part with his goods in this way, he says smilingly, his wife would scold him; whereupon the Rhinemaidens laugh immoderately at this hero who is so afraid of his

wife: perhaps she beats him, they suggest. With a parting sarcasm at his miserliness they dive beneath the waters again.

Siegfried has apparently been a little nettled by their gibes. Coming lower down he calls on them to return, saying that he will give them the Ring, which he has drawn from his finger and now holds aloft. When the Rhinemaidens come to the surface again they are grave and solemn. They bid him keep the Ring and ward it well till he learns the ill fate that lies in it; then will he fain be saved by them from the curse that lies upon it.

Quietly replacing the Ring on his finger, he asks them to tell him all they know. In gravely warning tones:

they tell him that the Ring is made from gold ravished from the Rhine, and that he who shaped it by cunning and lost it in shame laid a curse upon it, so that everyone who possesses it is doomed to death; as Siegfried slew the Dragon so shall he himself be slain, and that this very day, unless he returns the Ring to them, to be hidden in the depths of the Rhine, whose waters alone can wash out the curse.

The blind young hero replies that as he was not deceived by their fawning he will not be moved by their threats. Still more urgently, the harmonies shown in the first two bars of No. 29 taking on a yet more anxious tinge, as it were, they exhort him to reflect while it is yet time; but he only answers that he had already been warned of the curse by the Dragon, and still could not learn what fear is; through the magic of the Ring, he has been told, he could win him

the inheritance of the world, but that he despises; he would barter it for the grace of love, but never under a threat, for life and limb he counts of no more worth than this — picking up a clod of earth, holding it over his head, and throwing it behind him.

The Rhinemaidens can do no more with the infatuated young man; they call upon each other to leave to his doom this madman who thinks himself so valiant and wise and strong and yet is so bound and blind. He does not even know that he has been false — that a glorious gift was once in his hands and that he spurned it. But this very day a woman shall inherit the Ring — one who will work their will better than he.

They resume their dance, and, singing once more their liquid song, swim away to the background and are lost to sight. Looking after them, in smiling thoughtfulness, Siegfried muses upon the ways of women: they fawn upon a man, and when he is deaf to them, they try to frighten him with threats; then, when he smiles at these, they give him the edge of their tongue! And yet, he says, had not Gutrune his troth, he would have won for himself one of these delightful maidens.

When the last echo of the Rhinemaidens' song has died away in the orchestra, the trombones give out softly a fateful reminder of the Curse motive; then horns are heard from the background again, and the voices of Hagen and the vassals hailing Siegfried. These, accompanied by Gunther, soon appear, and descend the height to rest and prepare a meal on the level ground, where the game is piled up in a heap. All lie down; wine-skins and drinking-horns are produced, and Hagen calls upon Siegfried to tell them of the wonders of his hunting.

Siegfried laughingly declares that he has had no success; he went out after wild beast and found only wildfowl! — three young water-birds who, from the Rhine, sang a warning to him that he should be slain that day. At this, Gunther starts violently and looks darkly at Hagen.

Lying down between Hagen and Gunther, Siegfried, who is thirsty, asks for wine, and Hagen hands him a drinking-horn.

Siegfried drinks and offers the horn to Gunther, who, looking sadly and thoughtfully into it, mutters in choked tones, " The draught is dull and blanched: thy blood alone is there! " " Then thine with mine will I mingle," says Siegfried with a laugh, and he pours the contents of Gunther's horn into his own. The wine overflows, and Siegfried draws Gunther's attention to their blended blood flowing over and sinking into the earth — an unconscious forecast of what is to happen later.

Hagen now remarks that he has heard that Siegfried understands the song of birds. The hero answers lightly that since he has heard the sweet singing of women he cares no more for the birds, but if it will ease the heart of the gloomy Gunther he will sing them the story of his boyhood and its wonders. All lie down around him, he remaining upright.

To the accompaniment of motives all of which are by now very familiar to us he tells them how Mime brought him up to work the dwarf's will upon a fierce Dragon that brooded like a brute over a hoard; how he forged his father's sword and slew Fafner; how after tasting the Dragon's blood he was able to understand the song of the wood-bird; how he took from the cavern the Ring and the Tarnhelm, and, on the advice of the bird, swept the treacherous Mime away.

Hagen breaks out into hoarse laughter: " The sword he could forge not," he says, " yet did Mime feel it! " He has had another horn filled, into which he drops the juice of an herb; he hands the draught to Siegfried, who drains it slowly while the motive of Magic Deceit (No. 14) is heard again in the orchestra.

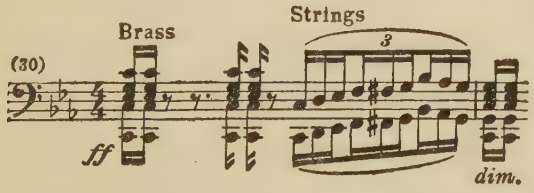
Siegfried's memory is restored by the potion, and he proceeds to tell how, guided by the bird, he found the rock, fought his way through the flames, and won Brynhilde for his wife. His ecstasy grows with the remembrance: " Sleeping I found the fairest of maids," he says; " the helm I loosed from the glittering maid; my kiss awoke her to life; to her burning breast was I folded, fast in Brynhilde's arms! "

Gunther, who has been listening intently and in amazement, now springs up in the utmost horror. Two ravens fly up out of the

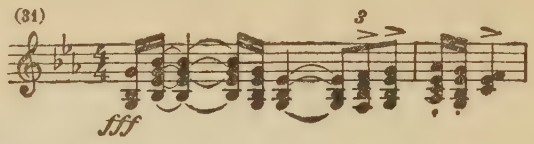
bush, circle over Siegfried, and then take their course towards the Rhine. " Can you read me," Hagen asks Siegfried, " the runes of those ravens also? " Siegfried, starting to his feet and gazing after the ravens, turns his back to Hagen, who at once thrusts his spear into the hero's back. Gunther strikes Hagen on the arm, but it is too late; Siegfried swings his shield on high with both hands and tries to crush Hagen, but his strength fails him, the shield drops behind him, and he himself falls on it with a crash.

The horrified vassals ask Hagen what deed is this that he has done; pointing to the prostrate body he merely answers, " Death for a broken oath! " turns quietly away and slowly strides out of sight over the heights, in the twilight that has begun to fall at the appearance of the ravens.

The solemn rhythm shown in the next quotation is heard in the orchestra, followed by the motive of the Annunciation of Fate. Gunther, grieved and stricken, bends down at Siegfried's side; the vassals, also filled with sympathy, stand round the dying man, who, supported by two of them in a sitting position, opens his eyes, and, to the music to which Brynhilde greeted the world on her awakening on the rock, gives a last greeting to Brynhilde. Then he sinks back and dies.

Night has now fallen. At a signal from Gunther the vassals raise Siegfried's body and carry it in a solemn procession over the rocky heights, Gunther following, while the orchestra pours out the solemn Death March:

To us who have followed the course of the drama, the March is a musical epitome of the story of the Wälsungs and of Siegfried. We hear, in succession, the motives of the Wälsungs, Sieglinde's

Pity, the Love of Sieglinde, the Sword, Siegfried, Siegfried as Hero (in a magnificently glorified form):



and Brynhilde.

During the playing of the March, mists are supposed to come up from the Rhine and gradually envelop the stage, making the funeral train invisible. In practice, however, the curtain is dropped shortly after the March commences, and when it rises again we see the hall of the Gibichungs, as in the first act. It is night, and the Rhine is bathed in moonlight. Gutrune comes from her chamber into the hall; she has been unable to sleep for evil dreams, and she fancies she has heard the sound of Siegfried's horn and the neigh of his horse. She has heard Brynhilde's laughter, and seen a woman steal silently towards the Rhine; and looking into Brynhilde's room she finds it empty. In the distance is heard Hagen's hoarse voice calling "Hoiho Hoiho! Awake! Awake! Torches! Fine booty home do we bring!" and Gutrune stands motionless, paralysed by terror.

The glow of torches is seen outside, and Hagen enters, grimly bidding Gutrune come forward and greet her Siegfried, for "the mighty hero comes home again!" The procession enters with Siegfried's body, Gunther accompanying it, while men and women with lights enter in great confusion. The body is set down in the middle of the hall, and Hagen tells the horrified Gutrune that Siegfried's bloodless mouth will blow his horn no more; no more will he hunt or fight or woo winsome women to love him; a wild boar has slain him, and Siegfried, Gutrune's husband, is dead. She falls on the body with a shriek and is gently tended by Gunther, whom she pushes back violently, accusing him of treachery and murder.

"Reproach not me," he says; "keep thy curses for Hagen; *he* was the accursed boar that dealt the hero his death!" Then the

agonised king breaks forth into a passionate reproach of Hagen, who, stepping forward and throwing off the mask, admits that he slew Siegfried, and glories in the deed. And now, he cries, the Ring is mine! Gunther claims it, and Hagen throws himself upon him; the vassals try to come between them, but Gunther falls dead from a stroke from Hagen's sword. Hagen grasps at Siegfried's hand, which raises itself threateningly, so that the women shriek with horror and all stand motionless, frozen with fear.

At this point Brynhilde comes forward from the background slowly and solemnly, and bids them make an end of their wailing; the woman they all have betrayed has come for vengeance: their cries are like those of children crying to their mother because sweet milk has been spilled, but no knell has she heard befitting so great a hero as Siegfried.

In deep pity she puts aside Gutrune and her lamenting, and Gutrune, realising that she, like Brynhilde, has been betrayed by Hagen, turns away from Siegfried in shame, and, dissolved in grief, bends over Gunther's body, remaining in that attitude to the end of the scene. Hagen leans defiantly on his spear and shield, sunk in gloomy brooding. Brynhilde, alone in the centre of the stage, gazes for a long time at the body of Siegfried, at first deeply agitated, then overwhelmed with grief; finally she turns to the men, and in tones of solemn exaltation bids them erect a great funeral pyre by the river-side and kindle a fire to consume the body of the greatest of heroes. His horse they are to bring to her, that he and she may follow their lord.

Her commands are carried out. For a time Brynhilde is lost in contemplation of the face of the dead Siegfried; then her expression becomes transfigured, and she sings a long and noble elegy upon him. She knows the whole truth now; no one was truer than Siegfried, yet, the victim and the dupe of fate, he broke his troth. She and he have been the instruments for the working out of Wotan's plans, and both have been broken by them.

Signing to the vassals to lift the body on to the pyre, she takes the Ring from Siegfried's finger and gazes at it thoughtfully. Once more the fatal symbol has come into her possession, and now it

shall go back to the Rhine, and the fire that burns her with Siegfried shall cleanse the Ring from its curse, while the maidens shall keep the gold for ever innocent and pure in the depths of the waters.

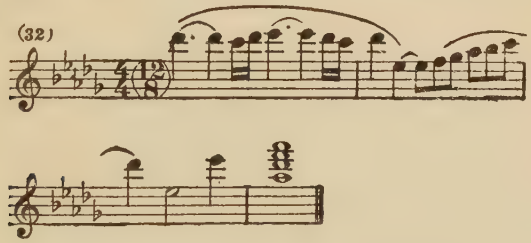
Putting the Ring on her own finger, she turns to the pile of logs on which Siegfried's body lies stretched, and taking a firebrand from one of the men she swings it and points to the background. "Fly home, ye ravens!" she cries; "tell this tale to Wotan, that here on the Rhine ye have heard! Wend your way to Brynhilde's rock, and bid Loge hasten to Valhalla, for the gods' twilight comes at last! So cast I the brand on Valhalla's glittering towers!" She throws the brand upon the pyre, which instantly breaks into flame; two ravens fly up from the rock by the shore and disappear in the background. The men bring forward her horse; she goes to it, unbridles it, speaks loving, confidential words to it, and gives herself up to the rapture of the thought of a fiery death for both of them with their hero.

Mounting the horse, she urges him towards the pyre, into which he leaps with her. The pyre blazes up, filling the stage in front of the hall, and appearing to seize on this also. The men and women, in horror, press towards the extreme foreground.

A cloud of smoke floats towards the background; at the same time the Rhine swells mightily and pours its flood over the fire. On its waves the three Rhinedaughters are seen swimming forward. At the sight of them, Hagen, who has been watching Brynhilde with increasing anxiety, hastily rids himself of shield, spear, and helmet, and plunges madly into the flood. Two of the Rhinemaidens throw their arms about his neck and draw him down into the depths with them, while Flosshilde exultantly holds the recovered Ring on high.

Through the cloudbank on the horizon there comes a bright red glow, in which the three Rhinemaidens are seen swimming in circles and sporting with the Ring in the calmer waves of the river, which has gradually subsided into its bed. The hall crashes in ruins, and in the fiery glow in the distance we see the interior of Valhalla, in which the gods and heroes sit assembled, as de-

scribed by Waltraute to Brynhilde in the first act. Flames seize upon the hall as the curtain falls.

The orchestra all this while has been pouring out a mighty flood of tone, and the gloom and the power of it and the extremity of the catastrophe become oppressive. But for the final bars of all Wagner reserves an exquisite stroke: the last strain to greet our ears is a new version of the motive of Redemption by Love:

given out in soft consolatory tones by the strings.

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

THE LEGEND of the Flying Dutchman is an old one. It tells of a certain sea-captain who, finding himself prevented by contrary winds from rounding the Cape, swore he would get past though Hell itself should prevail.

The bold resolution apparently gave great offence to Satan, who punished the audacious mariner by condemning him to sail the seas for ever, the only mitigation of the sentence being that he might land once in every seven years in the hope of finding a woman who would love him and be faithful to him; the Devil seems to have been cynically confident that the original sentence would begin to run again after each break between the periods of seven years.

The subject must have been treated in dramatic or novel form on many occasions, and two stories based on it — one by the German novelist Wilhelm Hauff, the other by our own Captain Marryat in *The Phantom Ship* — are fairly well known. It is extremely unlikely that Wagner ever heard of Marryat, though he may possibly have read Hauff's story.

Wagner seems to have first become seriously interested in the story during his Riga period (1837–1839), where he came across it in Heine's *Memoirs of Herr von Schnabelewopski.* Heine there gives an account of a play on the subject which he alleges he saw at Amsterdam. It has been said that he probably had in mind a play on the Flying Dutchman theme by the English dramatist Fitzball, which was staged at the Adelphi Theatre during Heine's visit to London in 1827; but some learned men have thrown doubt

upon this theory, which, in any case, is hardly of the first importance.

Heine characteristically treats the saving clause, as we may perhaps call it, of the Dutchman's sentence as a joke; he assumes that the Devil, knowing women as well as he did, had no objection to the harried mariner wasting his time looking for a faithful one, while the Dutchman, according to Heine, after each brief experience of married life was glad to escape to the sea again. Heine drew a double moral from the story — for women, not to marry Flying Dutchmen; for men, to beware of women.

As usual with Wagner, the legend, having once thrust its roots into him, had to be left to work its way upwards to the light in virtue of the laws of its own unconscious growth. Wagner was always very sorry for himself, regarding himself as a man particularly ill-used by fate; and in these early days of his he was mainly possessed by two great longings — for rest and comfort and for an ideal woman's love.

The story of the Flying Dutchman seemed to him to describe his own case exactly. In *A Communication to my Friends*, an account of his spiritual and artistic development which he published at the end of 1851 as preface to three of his libretti, he describes the legend of the Flying Dutchman as a blend of that of Ulysses and that of the Wandering Jew.

Wagner does not regard the Devil of the story as being merely the somewhat crude Satan of theology, but a symbolisation of the unresting element of Flood and Storm. Like Ahasuerus, he says, the mariner yearned for death to end his sufferings. The redemption that is denied to the Wandering Jew, however, he is given the chance of finding at the hands of "a woman who of very love, shall sacrifice herself for him." "The yearning for death thus drives him on to seek this woman; but she is no longer the housewifely Penelope of Ulysses, as courted of old, but the quintessence of womankind; and yet the still unrevealed, the longed-for, the dreamed-of, the infinitely womanly woman — let me say it in one word: *the Woman of the Future.*"

Partly because his creditors were pressing him hard, partly

because he thought *Rienzi* would bring him fame and fortune in Paris, Wagner, in July 1839, resolved to go to the French capital. He somehow or other managed to smuggle himself across the Russo-Prussian frontier, and, making his way to the port of Pillau, sailed thence for London in a small sailing-vessel named the *Thetis,* accompanied by his wife Minna and a huge Newfoundland dog named Robber.

The voyage, which usually took about eight days, lasted on this occasion some three and a half weeks. The most violent storms were encountered; more than once the ship was in danger of running aground; Wagner and Minna, who were the sole passengers, suffered incredible hardships; and to make matters worse, the superstitious sailors regarded them as the cause of the exceptionally bad weather. The sea brought up before him the legend of the Flying Dutchman again, and no doubt during the voyage he began to cast the story into some sort of dramatic shape.

The ship put in for safety in one of the Norwegian fjords, at a little fishing-village called Sandwike. Here he was struck by the call of the crew as they cast anchor and furled the sails; this call, which fascinated Wagner by the way it echoed from the cliffs of the fjord, gave him the germ of the theme of the Sailors' Song (see musical example No. 8).

Wagner arrived in London early in August, spent a week or so there, then sailed to Boulogne, where he stayed a month, and finally arrived in Paris on the 18th September. He remained there for two and a half years, he and Minna suffering incredible hardships and privations.

He soon found that there was very little chance of an unknown young German composer having a work of his produced at the Paris Opera. He drafted the scenario of *The Flying Dutchman,* which came to the notice of Léon Pillet, the manager of the Opera. Pillet took a fancy to it and asked Wagner to sell him the plot, as he was under contract to supply various composers with operatic libretti. Wagner pointed out to him that it had been his idea to set the subject to music himself, but Pillet assured him that there was not a ghost of a chance of his having anything accepted at the

Paris Opera for at least seven years, as the already existing contracts extended that far.

Wagner took the advice of friends on the matter and was advised to sell the draft, as there was nothing to prevent another librettist setting to work on the same subject, and, in fact, the brother-in-law of Victor Hugo had already thought of doing so. At a further interview with Pillet, Wagner was offered five hundred francs for his draft, and, five hundred francs being five hundred francs, he very wisely took them. A libretto based on Wagner's scenario was prepared and set to music by Dietsch, one of the conductors at the Opera. The work was actually performed in 1842, but apparently has not been heard of since. It would be very interesting to see the score of it now.

Meanwhile, with five hundred francs to relieve his more immediate necessities, Wagner set to work at his own *Flying Dutchman*. To get fresh air and freedom from the noise and the feverish haste of Paris he had taken rooms at Meudon, then a little country place near the capital. He hired a piano, a thing he had not possessed for months, and found, to his relief, that, as he said, he was still a composer. The poem of *The Flying Dutchman* was written between the 18th and the 28th May, 1841.

On the 29th June came the good news that *Rienzi* had been accepted at Dresden and would be produced there in the course of the following winter. The news both put new heart into him and awakened the desire to see his native country again. The music to *The Flying Dutchman* was composed in July and August, in the short space of seven weeks; the orchestration was completed during the winter in Paris, whither he had returned at the end of October.

Wagner promptly offered *The Flying Dutchman* to Munich and Leipzig, but each of these towns declined it; the answer given in one of the cases was that the opera was "not suitable for Germany"; "and I, poor fool," he wrote some time afterwards, "had thought that it was suitable *only* for Germany, since there was something in it that could strike responsive chords only from German hearts."

The opera was accepted by Berlin, but apparently only out of complaisance for Meyerbeer; there was a change of directorship about this time, and the new director, Küstner, who had declined the opera when he was at Munich, was not particularly pleased about carrying out an arrangement made by his predecessor. For the time being, however, Wagner believed that the opera would be produced in Berlin; and with the certain prospect of the production of *Rienzi* at Dresden he left Paris for his native land in the April of 1842.

Rienzi was produced with great success at Dresden on the 20th October, and the first performance of *The Flying Dutchman* took place in the same theatre on the 2nd January, 1843. It was not given in Berlin till a year and five days later.

After the enthusiasm that *Rienzi* had created in Dresden, Wagner was astonished at the comparatively cool reception of its successor. Apart from the quality of the music, *Rienzi* had pleased because, with its stirring theme and its brilliant ballets, it made a lively and fascinating entertainment. The setting of *The Flying Dutchman* must have looked drab in comparison; the subject seemed a gloomy one to the good Dresdeners, nor did they realise all at once that what they were expected to be interested in was not a stage spectacle but a problem in psychology.

The staging seems to have offered more difficulties than the Dresden machinists could cope with, and the third act missed a good deal of its effect because the sea and the ship both remained almost unmoved in spite of the terrible wind that howled through the orchestra. The singer of the Dutchman's part, Michael Wächter, had a face, a figure, and a manner, to say nothing of an intelligence, that even at the rehearsals, made Wagner realise that the part had been miscast; he was excessively fat, and never knew what to do with his stumpy arms and legs. The Senta was the great Schroeder-Devrient. Her also Wächter drove to despair at the rehearsals; when, in the climactic moment of the second act, she had to proclaim herself as the Dutchman's heaven-sent angel and bring him the message of salvation, she broke off and whis-

pered despairingly to Wagner, " How can I say it when I look into those beady eyes? Good God, Wagner, what a mess you have made! "

Schroeder-Devrient, who from the first was conscious of Wagner's exceptional genius, seems to have put her own heart into the work, and, in spite of the fact that she was physically no longer a romantic young figure, she seems to have been satisfactory even to the exacting Wagner. She was at the time in the thick of one of the many crises in her love-affairs; she was secretly conscious that her new lover was a bad substitute for his immediate predecessor and that her friends disapproved of her incomprehensible infatuation, and she was living at the time in a stage of perpetual nerves, hardly eating or sleeping. But curiously enough, as Wagner noted to his satisfaction, her emotional upset gave her Senta a quality it might not otherwise have had.

Wagner was probably right when, some thirty years later, he said, " So far as my knowledge goes, I can find in the life of no artist so striking a transformation, in so short a time, as is evident between *Rienzi* and *The Flying Dutchman,* the first of which was hardly finished when the second also was almost ready."

As he himself put it, in *Rienzi* his sole aim had been to write an " opera "; in *The Flying Dutchman* he made his first tentative step towards the musical drama. In the older opera the music was the first consideration, the libretto being constructed in such a way as to provide the composer with the conventional opportunities for aria, duet, trio, ensemble, and so on. In the musical drama as Wagner came to conceive it the drama is the first consideration, and it is from the drama that the music must take its expression, its colour, and its form.

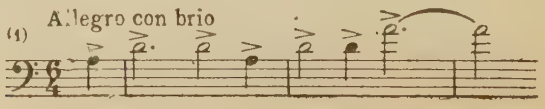
It is true, as Wagner himself admitted, that to all intents and purposes the old divisions of aria, duet, etc., still exist in *The Flying Dutchman,* but they are not there for their own sakes, merely as so many " numbers " ; they are not imposed arbitrarily upon the dramatic subject, but grow naturally out of it. In *Tannhäuser* he got further away than in *The Flying Dutchman* from the opera of " numbers," and in *Lohengrin* further still; while in

the works of his prime all traces of the old arbitrary divisions for their own sakes disappear.

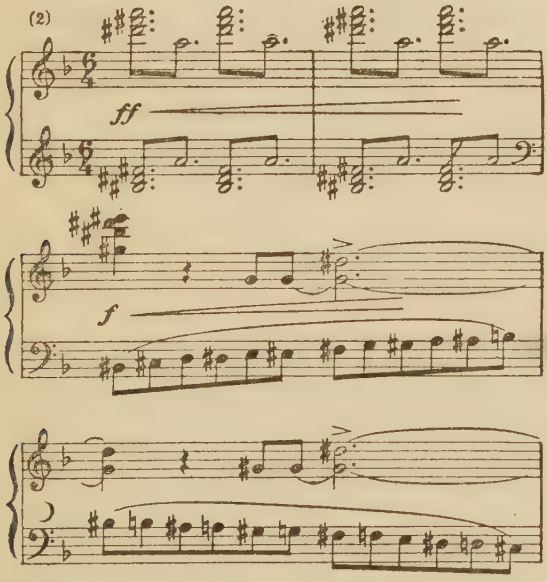
In planning *The Flying Dutchman* he did not begin, as was customary before that time, from the circumference, as it were, and work towards the centre, but from the centre itself. He tells us that the opera evolved spontaneously from a single dramatic germ — the ballad of Senta in the second act. This was the " number " he actually wrote first; dramatically the whole conception of the opera is contained in essence in this cry of sympathy of Senta for the unhappy sailor whom she has never seen, while musically, as he said later, the dramatic germ of the ballad spread itself in all directions over the remaining tissue of the opera.

Next after the Senta ballad he appears to have written the song of the Norwegian sailors and the " Phantom Song " of the crew of the Dutchman's ship. These sections were written when he was still hoping to have the future opera produced in Paris; he had the German words, indeed, translated into French, for a sort of trial demonstration before the Opera authorities, which, however, never took place. When, after the arrival of the piano at Meudon, he set to work upon the text again, wondering half doubtingly whether he was still a composer, the first things he wrote were the Helmsman's Song and the Spinning Chorus; and he was so pleased with these when he tried them on the piano that he plunged forthwith into the body of the work, and, as we have seen, completed the music within seven weeks.

The overture, which was written last, is the finest piece of work in its genre that the world had known since the great overtures of Beethoven; it is a worthy forerunner of the overtures to *Tannhäuser* and *The Mastersingers*.

Wagner himself has left us an explanatory analysis of the overture, from which we see that he intended it as a summary of the action of the opera. Through a harmony of bare fifths and octaves we hear in the horns and bassoons the striking motive typical of the Dutchman:

It has recently been claimed that this motive is identical with a phrase in one of the folksongs of the Hebrides, but too much importance need not be attached to the resemblance; the notes composing the theme are the leading ones of the natural scale — the octave, the fourth, and the fifth — and many a primitive melody or call must have been based upon them.

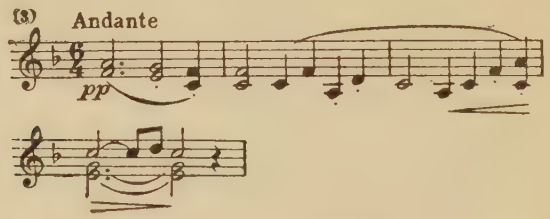
After this curt statement of it the Dutchman's theme is thundered out by the trombones and tuba and runs into a tearing discord, at the end of which a new motive appears in the wood-wind:

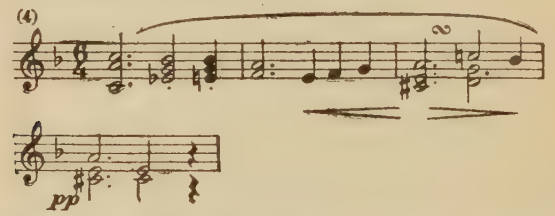
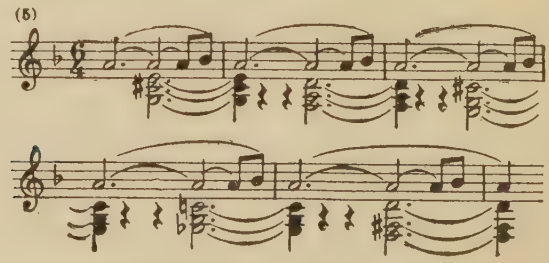


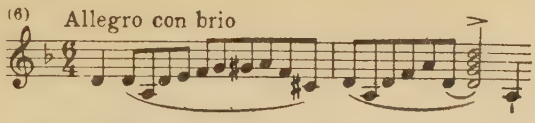
To this motive (seen in bars two and three of the above quotation), it is difficult to give a precise name; it may be regarded as part of the curse laid on the Dutchman.

From Wagner's analysis it is clear that at the commencement of the overture we are to imagine the Flying Dutchman's ship scudding before the storm; it puts to land, where the captain has so often been promised rest and redemption. The motive of the Dutchman grows fainter and fainter in the orchestra, till finally nothing is left of it but repetitions of the basic A in the

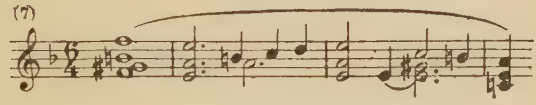
kettle-drums; then, after a pause, the motive of Redemption comes out in the wind alone, the English horn having the melody:



This part of the melody is at once repeated an octave higher, the oboe taking the tune, and it is followed by the second strain, the melody reverting to the English horn again:

This is instantly followed by a motive to which again it is difficult to attach a name, for in the opera it is used in connection with both the Dutchman and the Norwegian sailors; the melody plays upon two notes only, while the harmonic basis keeps slipping down chromatically:

Once more we hear the Dutchman's theme in the horns, and then a fresh motive, suggestive of the Dutchman's weary wanderings on the sea:

(6) Allegro con brio

that has already been hinted at a little earlier, is taken up and handled at rather greater length, in conjunction with the motive of the Dutchman's Longing for Death:

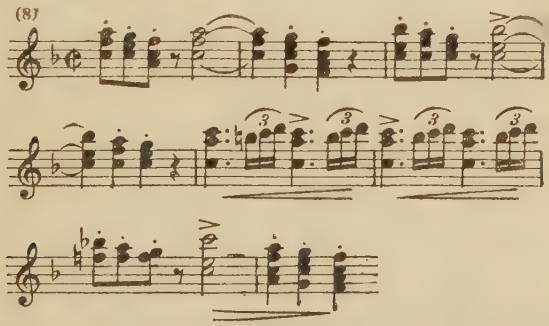
(7)



and the main Dutchman motive (No. 1).

From Wagner's explanation we see that what he had in his mind was the Dutchman, even after he is safe on land, running over in imagination the endless sufferings brought upon him by the Curse.

Suddenly we hear in the wood-wind a song that does not appear in the opera until the second act, when it is sung by the crew of the Norwegian ship:

(8)

From Wagner's analysis we gather that we are here to picture to ourselves a stately ship sweeping past the anchoring-place of the Dutchman; he hears the sailors on the ship singing in glad anticipation of home. The joyous sound fills the Dutchman with rage; he sets sail again and rides madly through the storm, frightening and silencing the happy singers. All this is represented to

us in the overture by further handlings of the motives already quoted.

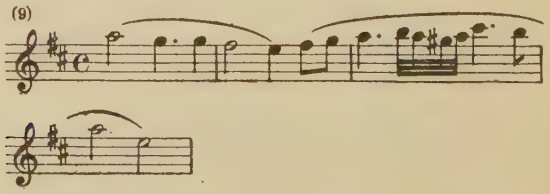
Gradually the motive of Redemption takes possession of the orchestra; the Dutchman, as he crashes through the tempest, has now one thought only in his mind — that of the woman whose love is to bring him salvation and peace.

Suddenly, says Wagner, a ray of light pierces the gloom of the night like a lightning flash; no doubt this is the point at which the hitherto predominantly minor tonality changes definitely to the major, and the tempo to vivace, the Redemption motive (No. 3) coming out in the bright key of D major. The light comes and goes; the mariner drives steadfastly towards it; " it is a woman's look, which, full of sublime sorrow and godlike sympathy, thrusts towards him. A heart has opened its fathomless depths to the monstrous sorrows of the damned; this heart must sacrifice itself for him, break with sympathy for him, and in destroying his sorrows destroy also itself.

" At this divine sight the unhappy man breaks down as his ship also is shattered to atoms; but from the waves he rises hallowed and whole, led by the victorious redeemer's rescuing hand to the day-dawn of sublimest love." This final section of the overture is, for the most part, a joyous rhapsody upon the theme of Redemption, towards the finish of which the Dutchman's theme thunders out triumphantly in the heavy brass.

Wagner subjected *The Flying Dutchman* to a slight revision in later years, when both his spiritual and musical development dictated to him a change for the better both in the ending of the opera and in the ending of the overture. In the original score, published in 1844, both the opera and the overture end with a transformed statement of the Redemption motive:

(9)



followed by the theme of the Dutchman in the brass. It was in later years that he added the ten bars that give its magical quality to the present ending both of the overture and of the opera.

Just as we think the overture is about to end in the now firmly established key of D major, Wagner suddenly switches into G major, tones the orchestra down in a moment from *ff* to *p*, and lets the wood-wind, accompanied by the harp, give out softly and gently the Redemption motive in its original form (No. 3). In another half-dozen bars the key of D major is re-established, and the overture, instead of finishing *fortissimo*, as it had done in the first version, ends softly and slowly in a sort of spiritualised transfiguration. More will be said on this point when we come to consider the final page of the opera itself.

It will be seen how strictly Wagner has kept to the central dramatic purpose of the opera in his overture. Had he been writing a mere *potpourri* of the melodies of the opera, in the style of so many of his predecessors and contemporaries, we should certainly have had some reference to the other main characters of the opera — Erik and Daland — and it is safe to say that no other composer of the time would have neglected the easy opportunity to ingratiate himself with the audience by including the charming Spinning Chorus in his overture. Wagner keeps strictly to the Curse on the Dutchman and his redemption from it by Senta; the only apparently extraneous musical matter introduced is the Sailors' Song, and this, as we have shown, is really justified in terms of Wagner's programme for the overture.

The setting of the first scene shows us a sea-coast with steep, rocky cliffs. The greater part of the stage is occupied by the sea, which stretches far back; the rocks in the foreground form gorges on each side, that give back the many echoes heard during the scene. On the sea a violent storm is raging, but it is calmer between the rocks. The ship of a Norwegian captain, Daland, has just cast anchor near the shore, and the sailors are busily furling the sails, throwing ropes, and so on. Daland himself has gone on shore; he has climbed a cliff and is looking landwards, trying to recognise the locality.

In 1852 Wagner wrote an article intended for the German theatres, giving minute instructions as to the proper way of producing *The Flying Dutchman*. He insisted that the orchestra and the stage should be in perfect accord — that when there was an audible storm in the orchestra, for instance, there should be a visible storm on the stage. We are, as it were, to be put in tune with the Dutchman's psychology before he actually appears; we are to be shown such a storm that we shall be in anticipatory sympathy with him.

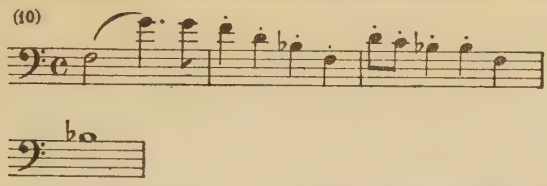
The sea, said Wagner, should be shown as boisterous as possible, while the treatment of the ship cannot be too realistic; for instance, when, between the two stanzas of the Steersman's Song that comes later, there is a wild upward surge in the orchestra, we should have it made quite clear to us that here the ship has been violently shaken by an unusually large wave.

The sailors, at their work, give cries of "Hoyohe! Halloho!" and so on, to fragments of the motives always associated with the sailors — in this case the first three notes of No. 8 and the figure of two notes characteristic of No. 5. Their cries are echoed from the gorges.

Daland, descending from the cliff, announces that the storm has blown them seven miles out of their way just when they were nearing home. He knows the bay; it is Sandwike — the bay in which, it will be remembered, the *Thetis* put it on the voyage from Pillau. He has actually seen the shore on which stands his own house. He had thought that soon he would have his daughter Senta in his arms; then all the winds of hell blew, and drove them where they are now. But the storm is at last abating; and going on board he tells the crew they can now sleep, as the danger is over. The sailors go below; Daland also goes into his cabin, telling the Steersman to take the watch for him that night, but to be careful not to sleep.

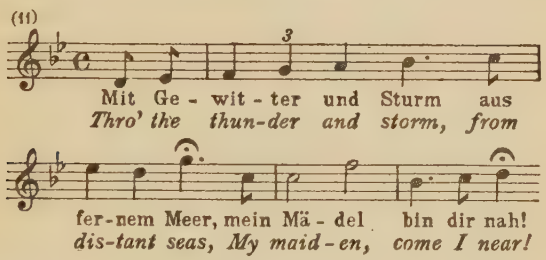
The Steersman alone remains on deck. The storm has died away, except for an occasional roughness out on the open sea. The horns and bassoons give out softly a theme:

(10)



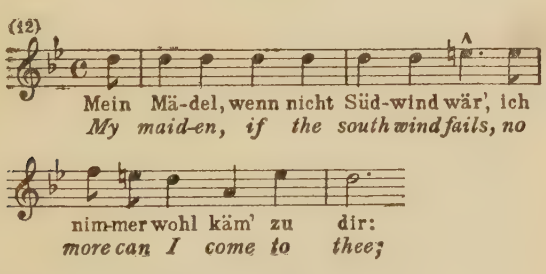
associated with the jollification of the sailors. The Steersman yawns, pulls himself together, and, by way of fighting against sleep, bursts into a little song to his love:

(11)


Mit Ge - wit - ter und Sturm aus
Thro' the thun-der and storm, from
fer-nem Meer, mein Mä - del bin dir nah!
dis-tant seas, My maid-en, come I near!

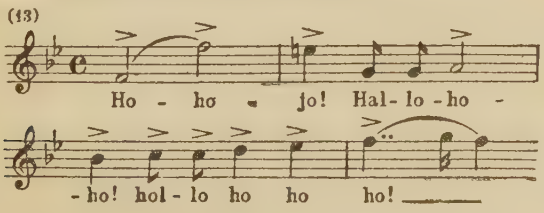
He exhorts the soft south wind to fill their sails and blow them home:

(12)



and finishes up with a vigorous " Hoyoho! ":

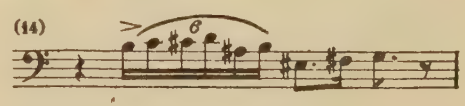
(13)



At this point the ship is shaken by a great wave; the Steersman starts up and looks round him apprehensively; then, convinced that everything is right, he sits down again and sings a second stanza of his song, but, overcome with weariness, falls asleep before he can finish it.

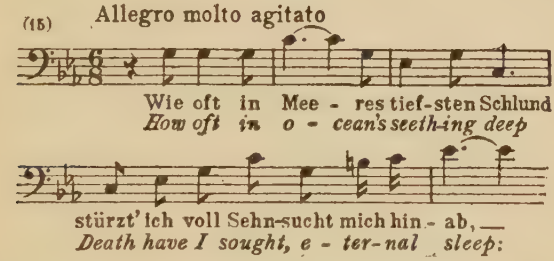
The storm increases and the stage grows darker. In the distance appears the Flying Dutchman's ship, with black masts and blood-red sails; it rapidly approaches the shore, on the opposite side to the Norwegian ship. The storm-music of the overture breaks out again, the Dutchman's theme (No. 1) is heard first of all in the horns, then in the trumpets and trombones, and at the height of the orchestral turmoil the Dutchman's ship casts anchor with a tremendous crash.

The Steersman starts at the noise; the Sailors' Dance (No. 10) comes out softly in the bassoons, and the Steersman, after a hasty glance at the helm, is reassured and makes yet another effort to complete his song; after only a couple of bars of it, however, he falls asleep again. To the strain of No. 5, heavily phrased and darkly coloured, the spectral crew of the Dutchman's ship furl the sails in dead silence. The Dutchman's theme is given out low down in the trumpets, then again in the horn, as he steps ashore, dressed in black Spanish costume.

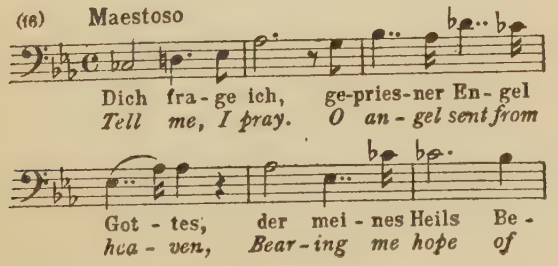
Wagner tells us that the slowness of his gait should be in marked contrast with the supernatural swiftness of the incoming of the ship. A stumbling sort of figure:

comes out in the violas and 'cellos, and we have Wagner's own authority for regarding this as descriptive of the rolling walk characteristic of the sailor when he first steps on land after a long voyage.

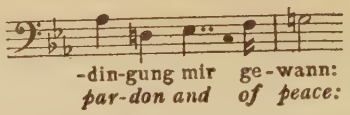
During the recitative and aria that follow, the actor, according to Wagner, is not to indulge in exaggerated stridings to and fro; outwardly he is to preserve a certain " terrible repose " even in

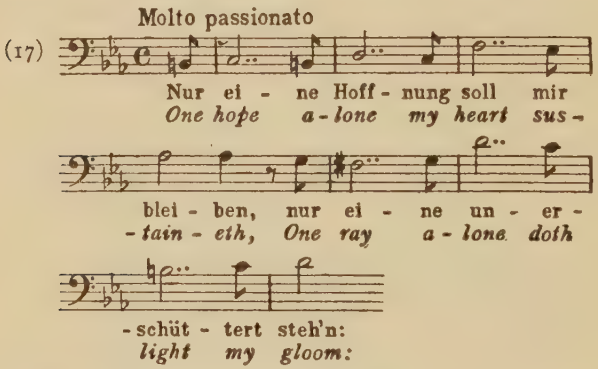
the most passionate expression of his anguish and despair. "The term is past," he says, "and once again behind me lie seven long years; the weary sea throws me once more on land."

Half wearily, half defiantly, he apostrophises the "haughty ocean," that is for ever changing, while his pain is eternal. Never, he knows, will he find on land the salvation he seeks there; to the ocean he will be true until its last billow shall have rolled and itself be swallowed up. To the accompaniment of the swaying figure that already, in the overture, has symbolised his endless wanderings, he tells us how he has often sought death on the sea, but always in vain:

(15) Allegro molto agitato
Wie oft in Mee - res tief-sten Schlund
How oft in o - cean's seeth-ing deep
stürzt' ich voll Sehn-sucht mich hin - ab, —
Death have I sought, e - ter-nal sleep:

He has flung himself on pirates and offered his ship, filled as it is with treasure, as rare booty; he has driven the ship straight on to the cliffs; but nowhere and nohow can he find the death he desires, for his curse is eternal.

Turning his gaze towards heaven he sends up a poignant prayer to "the heaven-appointed angel" to say whether the promise given to him was not simply a ghastly mockery:

(16) Maestoso
Dich fra - ge ich, ge-pries-ner En - gel
Tell me, I pray. O an - gel sent from
Got - tes, der mei - nes Heils Be -
hea - ven, Bear-ing me hope of



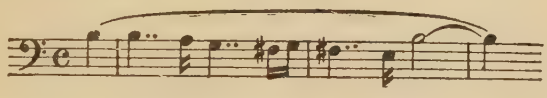
Then, with a cry of " Vain hope! " he gives full vent to his fury and despair: " Cursed am I for aye! For love and faith unchanging in vain I pray! " The passion of the orchestra dies down to an exhausted quivering in the basses and kettle-drums as he falls to the ground as if undone; then he permits himself one last hope:

Molto passionato
(17)
Nur ei - ne Hoff - nung soll mir
One hope a - lone my heart sus -
blei - ben, nur ei - ne un - er -
- tain - eth, One ray a - lone doth
- schüt - tert steh'n:
light my gloom:

that some day the earth itself will crash to ruin and he, perishing with it, at last find peace. With the last remains of his energy he cries a mad curse upon the world; then he leans gloomily, with folded arms, against a cliff in the foreground, while from the hold of the ship there comes from the invisible crew a sombre echo of his last words, " Endless destruction on us fall! "

As the Dutchman's motive comes out in the dark colour of the horns, Daland steps on deck to see the direction of the wind, and perceives, to his astonishment, a strange vessel. He wakens the Steersman, who makes another attempt to get on with his ditty, and the Steersman hails the Dutch ship through a speaking-trumpet. His " Ahoys! " are echoed by the cliffs, but no answering sound comes from the other ship.

At last Daland, noticing the Dutchman on shore, hails him and asks him his name and his country. There is a long silence, and

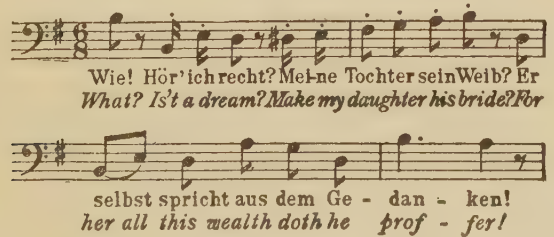
then the violas and 'cellos, with the trombones and tuba coming in on the final chord, give out a motive that we may call that of Brokenness:

(18) 

it is expressive of the exhaustion and despair of the Dutchman, and is a curious anticipation of the motive of Wotan's Dejection in *The Ring*.

Daland goes on shore and engages in conversation with the stranger. He learns that the newcomer is Dutch, that his ship has been unharmed by the storm, that for years he has wandered on the face of the waters, and that his heart longs for haven and home. Hearing that Daland's cottage is within a few miles of their anchorage, the Dutchman asks the Norwegian to make him for a while his guest, for which he will pay him with the treasures that are piled up in his ship. To prove the truth of his words he makes a sign to the watch, and some of the sailors bring on shore a chest; opening this, the Dutchman shows the astonished Daland pearls and jewels and riches of all kinds; all these he will give Daland for a single night's shelter, for what is wealth to him, who has neither wife nor child, and seeks his native land in vain? Has Daland a daughter? he asks. " I have a loving child," answers Daland, whereupon the Dutchman cries, " May she be my wife! "

The simple Daland is delighted with the proposition:

(19) 
Wie! Hör' ich recht? Mei-ne Tochter sein Weib? Er
What? Is't a dream? Make my daughter his bride? For
selbst spricht aus dem Ge - dan - ken!
her all this wealth doth he prof - fer!

The bargain is soon concluded; Daland is rejoiced at the prospect of so rich a son-in-law, while the Dutchman believes that one who

is so faithful a daughter as Daland describes his Senta to be will be an equally faithful wife. "Will she my angel be?" asks the Dutchman aside; and once again the old hope of salvation revives in him.

During the duet between the two men the wind has changed and the weather cleared up. The Norwegian Steersman and the sailors jointly greet the south wind, and to the strain of No. 10 Daland points out to the Dutchman how good the omens are. While the mariners hoist the sails, the Dutchman bids Daland put out to sea first; he must rest his own crew awhile, he says, but he will follow soon, and as his ship is swift it will soon overtake the other. Daland pipes the crew and the ship is cast loose, the sailors joining in the Steersman's Song (No. 11, etc.). The Norwegian ship sails away; the Dutchman goes on board his own ship, and the curtain falls.

The part of Daland is one that it is difficult for the actor to make credible to us today. Wagner seems to have realised this, and he earnestly beseeches the player of the part not to drag it down to the obviously comic. Daland, he says, is just a rough, everyday sort of sailor, who is used to braving storms and dangers for the sake of gain, and to whom there can be nothing disgraceful in the apparent sale of his daughter to a rich man; "he thinks and acts, like a hundred thousand others, without the least suspicion that he is doing anything wrong."

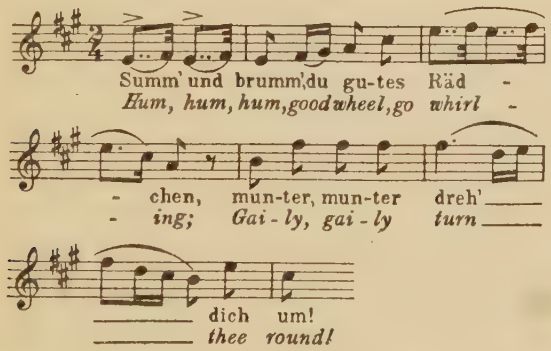
Wagner originally planned *The Flying Dutchman* in one act, partly because of the desire for concentration in the action and the psychological motives, partly because he thought that in this form it would stand a better chance of acceptance as a curtain-raiser before a ballet at the Paris Opera. It was divided into three acts later to suit the convenience of the theatres and the public.

When the opera is given in three acts, as is done practically everywhere but at Bayreuth, the second act commences with an orchestral Introduction in which we hear first of all the Steersman's Song, then the Sailors' Dance, then other motives associated with the sea, such as the first bar of No. 2 and No. 5.

When the curtain rises we see the interior of Daland's house —

a large room on the walls of which are sea-pictures, charts, and so on. Prominent on the wall at the back is the portrait of a pale man with a dark beard, in a black Spanish costume. Senta, Daland's daughter, is leaning back in a large chair, her arms crossed, her eyes fixed dreamily on the portrait. Senta's nurse, Mary, and a number of maidens are sitting round the fireplace spinning. A humming that has already been heard in the strings before the curtain rose now becomes fully definite, and over it the orchestra hints for a few bars at the melody of the Spinning Chorus, which is then sung by the maidens in harmony:

(20)



The lovers of all the maidens are on the seas, and the maidens, while they spin, pray for a favourable wind to send the men home to them.

Mary interrupts the chorus for a moment, and after it has been resumed and concluded she turns to Senta, who is neither spinning nor singing with the others: if she does not spin, she reminds Senta, she will get no gift from her lover. The other maidens laughingly remark that Senta has no need to work at spinning like them, for her lover does not sail the sea; he is a hunter, and brings her game instead of gold.

Too much absorbed in her own thoughts to notice their badinage, Senta, without moving, softly sings to herself a verse of the ballad that will follow later; the melody, which is here given out only by the orchestra, is that shown as No. 3. Why, Mary asks her, will she

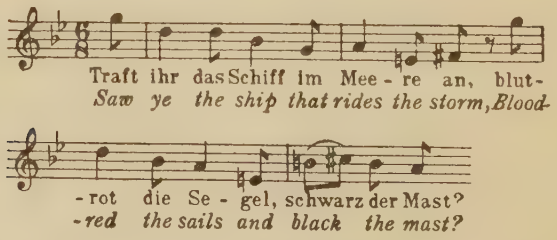
lose her young years dreaming before that picture? Senta, still motionless, sighs deeply, and asks why Mary ever filled her with sadness by telling her the fate of that hapless man. The others again indulge their wit at her expense; they hope no blood may be shed, for " Erik is a fiery lad " and may shoot the rival who is hanging on the wall.

Aroused at last by their laughter, Senta starts up passionately and bids them cease their jesting. The maidens turn their spinning-wheels rapidly and noisily, as if to drown Senta's scoldings, and sing their Spinning Chorus more loudly than before. At last Senta asks for a respite from this eternal humming. Will no one sing a better song? Will not Mary sing the old ballad? Mary holds up her hands in horror at the suggestion; better leave this terrible Flying Dutchman in peace! Thereupon Senta, in spite of Mary's protests, declares that she will sing the ballad herself, and awaken their pity for the unfortunate victim of fate.

The maidens stop their wheels to listen, but Mary peevishly declares that she will go on with her spinning. This she continues to do, staying by the fire, while the others put their spinning-wheels aside and gather round Senta.

Then follows the ballad that Wagner declared to be the central psychological and musical point of the opera. The Dutchman motive thunders out in the lower strings, bassoons, and tuba; Senta, still sitting in the armchair, repeats it to the words " Yohoho! Hohoho! " then plunges into the melody of the ballad itself:

(21)


Traft ihr das Schiff im Mee - re an, blut-
Saw ye the ship that rides the storm, Blood-
- rot die Se - gel, schwarz der Mast?
- red the sails and black the mast?

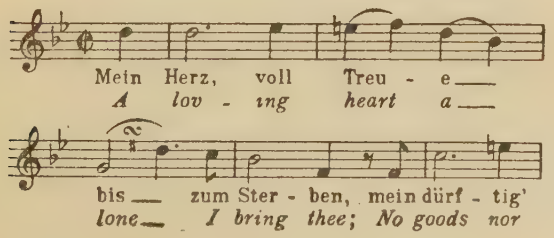
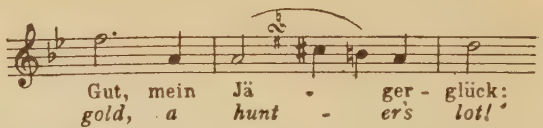
The words are a description of the Dutchman's ship, with black masts and blood-red sails, riding the storm, with the pale captain

striding up and down the deck unrestingly. In only one way can he find salvation, says Senta to the melody of No. 3 — by a wife who will be faithful to him unto death; may Heaven soon grant the unfortunate man this boon! At the end of the ballad Senta leaps up from the chair in exaltation, and, to the melody of No. 9, prays that she may be the one appointed to save him: "O, may God's angel hither speed thee; my love to grace again shall lead thee!"

During the singing of the ballad Senta's auditors have become more and more interested, even Mary ceasing her spinning to listen; but at this last wild cry of Senta's the maidens start to their feet in terror. At the climax of the excitement the door opens and Erik, Senta's lover, is seen standing in the doorway. He has heard Senta's cry. The maidens appeal to him to help them, for Senta is out of her senses; while Mary vows that the horrible picture that is the cause of all this trouble shall be burnt as soon as the father returns.

Erik gloomily announces that Daland's ship is already in sight, and Senta, who has so far seemed oblivious to her surroundings, starts up joyfully. The delighted maidens are for hurrying on at once to the shore, but Mary insists on their staying to prepare wine and food for the sailors. She drives the excited girls out of the room; Senta would go with them, but Erik holds her back. He implores her to set him free from his torment: her father will soon be here, and before he sails again will no doubt accomplish his purpose to marry her to another.

In a smoothly running aria of a somewhat Italian type:

(22)

Erik pleads with Senta to accept him as her husband, although he is only a humble hunter and cannot bring her such wealth as seamen can.

He grows more desperate as Senta tries to break away from him to go to greet her father. He knows, he says, where her heart is set — on the portrait; the ballad she has just sung is only another proof of her infatuation. Senta confesses that one thought alone possesses her — that of redeeming the Dutchman from his endless pain; and Erik, to some wild discords in the orchestra:

(23)

cries out despairingly that she has been caught in Satan's toils.

She falls exhausted into a chair, and Erik, in a subdued voice, tells her of a vision he has had in a dream; Senta appears to fall into a " magnetic sleep " and to dream the episode herself as Erik, leaning over the side of the chair, tells it to her. In his dream, says Erik he saw, from the cliffs, a strange ship put in to shore; from it came two men, one of whom he knew to be her father, while the other, clothed in black, pale and ghostly, was the Dutchman of the portrait; Senta flew to give her father greeting, but suddenly turned to the stranger, fell at his feet, and clasped his knees; the seaman raised her up, she fell on his breast and kissed him, and then both sailed away.

The story kindles Senta's enthusiasm afresh; waking from her hypnotic sleep she cries, " He seeks for me! His fate I go with him to share! " Erik, with a cry of " She is lost to me! My dream was true! " rushes off in horror and dismay. But Senta's exaltation dies away as quickly as it had come. Sinking into a brooding silence again, she remains motionless, her gaze riveted on the portrait; then, very softly but with deep feeling, she sings the con-

cluding words of the ballad, praying once more that Heaven may grant the stricken one redemption from his curse by the discovery of the woman who will be faithful to him.

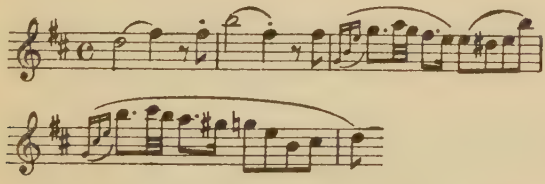
Almost before the phrase has finished, the door opens, and the Dutchman and Daland appear. The latter remains for a while in the doorway, as if waiting for Senta to welcome him; the Dutchman enters at once, and, with his eyes fixed on Senta, moves slowly to the foreground. Senta's eyes shift from the picture to him; she gives a startled cry and then stands as if spellbound.

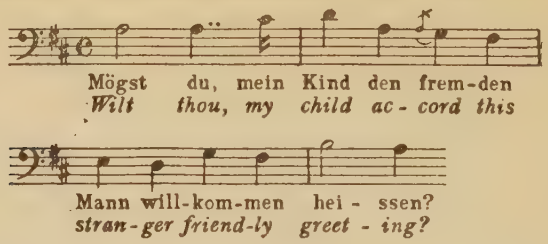
For a while there is one of those stage silences — the most famous of them is that in the first act of *Tristan and Isolde* — in which Wagner so delighted; and he makes the silence more tense by very much the same methods as in his later works; the kettledrums throb fatefully, while the strings softly give out a phrase:

(24)

that has some curious affinities with the music heard in the orchestra when Brynhilde opens her eyes at the coming of Siegfried.

Daland, after a word of reproach to Senta for not greeting him more warmly, approaches her and draws her to him. " Who is this stranger? " she asks. The orchestra breaks out into a joyous melody of the somewhat Italian type that obsessed Wagner at this stage of his career:

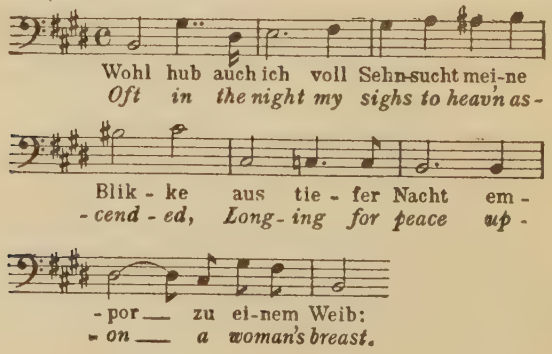
(25)

and the bluff Daland smilingly tells her he has brought with him a seaman like himself, who has long wandered over the restless waters, has brought back great wealth with him, and would now be their guest:

(26)

Senta nods assent, and, turning to the Dutchman, Daland asks triumphantly if his praise of his daughter's beauty was justified. The Dutchman makes a gesture of agreement, and Daland, turning again to his daughter, suggests that on the morrow she shall give the stranger her hand. He produces some jewels and pearls, which, he assures her, are a mere trifle to what shall afterwards be hers.

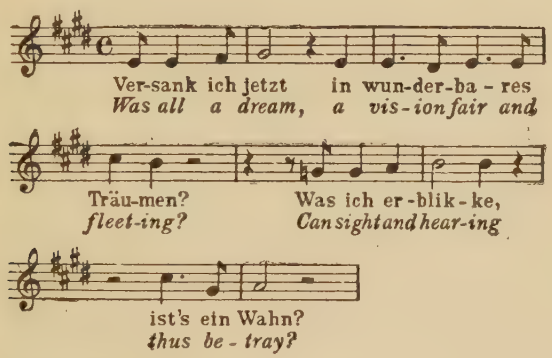
Senta and the Dutchman all this while keep their eyes fixed on each other without paying any attention to Daland, who, at last noticing their absorption in each other, thinks it well to leave them alone. He goes out slowly, a trifle perplexed, wondering to the last why neither of them makes any attempt to approach the other.

There is another fateful silence, and then, after we have heard No. 1 in the orchestra once more, followed by Wagner's favourite kettle-drum effect, the Dutchman, deeply moved, muses upon this apparition that seems to be the realisation at last of his eternal dream. The duet proper commences with an expressive melody:

(27)

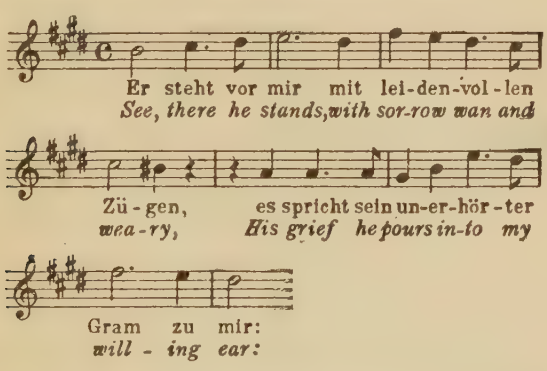

Wohl hub auch ich voll Sehn-sucht mei-ne
Oft in the night my sighs to heav'n as -
Blik - ke aus tie - fer Nacht em -
- cend - ed, Long - ing for peace up -
- por zu ei-nem Weib:
- on a woman's breast.

to which the Dutchman tells of his eternal longing for release through a woman's love: would that it might be through such an angel as this! Taking up the strain, Senta, in the same subdued voice, asks herself if this is all a dream:

(28)

Ver-sank ich jetzt in wun-der-ba - res
Was all a dream, a vis-ion fair and
Träu-men? Was ich er-blik-ke,
fleet-ing? Can sight and hear-ing
ist's ein Wahn?
thus be - tray?

Then her melody takes a great upward movement:

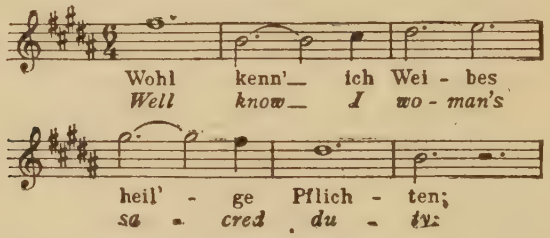
(29)

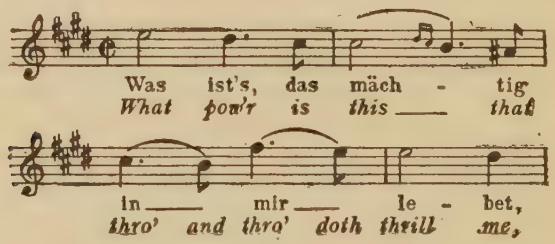

Er steht vor mir mit lei-den-vol-len
See, there he stands, with sor-row wan and
Zü - gen, es spricht sein un-er-hör - ter
wea - ry, His grief he pours in-to my
Gram zu mir:
will - ing ear:

She will bring him love and peace, she says, while the Dutchman's voice blends with hers in a passionate cry for rest and release.

The music goes into the minor key as the Dutchman, drawing nearer to Senta, asks her if she is willing to give herself to him for ever in love and faith; then the key of E major establishes itself again as Senta enthusiastically declares that whoever he may be and whatever may be the curse upon him, whatever horrors fate

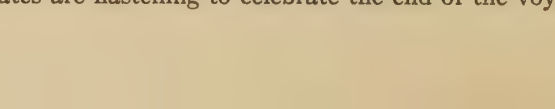
may have in store for her through him, she will obey her father's will. He warns her of the doom that will fall upon her if she should break her troth, for her word, once given, will be without recall; but she bids him have no fear, for well she knows her woman's sacred duty, and to him whom she chooses she will be faithful unto death:

(30)

Their voices blend in ecstasy, and a new melody is launched by Senta:

(31)

and taken up by the Dutchman after her.

While Senta is appealing fervently to Heaven for help in her trial, and the Dutchman is seconding the prayer, a more earthly strain makes its appearance in the orchestra:

(32)



and Daland, entering hurriedly, tells them that the seamen and their mates are hastening to celebrate the end of the voyage. Can

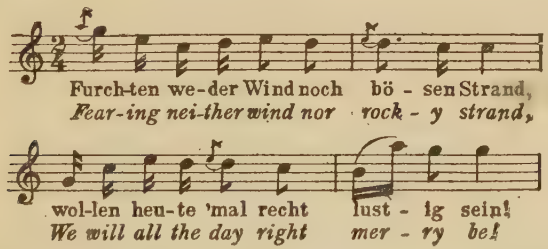
he announce to them that Senta and the Dutchman are plighted? Senta, with solemn determination, gives the Dutchman her hand, vowing to be true unto death, and the act ends with a joyous trio.

The third act commences with a vigorous orchestral introduction in which we hear first of all the motive of Senta's Ecstasy (No. 31), then a phrase from the ballad (No. 4); this is followed by the theme of the Sailors' Jollity (No. 10), and this in turn by No. 5. Finally the music settles down into the Sailors' Song (No. 8), to the rollicking strains of which the curtain rises.

We see a creek with a rocky strand; in the foreground, to the side, stands Daland's house; in the background, fairly close to each other, the ships of the Dutchman and Daland are seen at anchor. It is a clear, bright night; the Norwegian ship is lit up, and on the deck the sailors are merrymaking; but the Dutchman's ship is enveloped in an unnatural gloom and a deathlike silence.

The Norwegian sailors begin with the now familiar melody of No. 8, which is soon followed by another merry tune:

(33)


Furch-ten we-der Wind noch bö - sen Strand,
Fear-ing nei-ther wind nor rock - y strand,
wol-len heu-te 'mal recht lust - ig sein!
We will all the day right mer - ry be!

They dance on the deck to the strain of No. 10, stamping their feet heavily at the commencement of each down beat of the music. The maidens come out of the house, carrying baskets of food and drink, with which they go up to the Dutch ship: "A nice sort of dance *there*," they say; "the fellows do not seem to have need of maidens!"

The Norwegian sailors hail them, and are told that the maidens are taking part of the wine to their neighbours, who need it as much as they. "Full sure!" replies the Steersman; "they are tired and dumb with thirst"; and he and his mates comment on the

darkness and the ghostly silence of the other ship. The maidens stop as they are on the point of going on the Dutchman's ship; they can still see and hear no one, nor are there any lights to guide them. Going close to the water they call to the crew of the ship, but no reply breaks the sinister silence. " They must be dead," say the sailors mockingly, with affected sadness; " no need have they of wine or bread! "

In a sequence of rousing choruses the maidens and Norwegian sailors keep calling upon the Dutchmen to rouse themselves and come and dance with them on the strand. " They're old and grey, their hearts are lead," say the sailors, " and all their sweethearts long time dead! " More and more urgently they call on the Dutchmen, but without effect; there is another long silence, followed by gloomy, nervous runs in the 'cellos.

The terrified and perplexed maidens cannot be pacified by the rough jokes of the Norwegians; and at last they run away in terror from the Dutch ship and hand their baskets to the sailors on board the Norwegian vessel. Then they go away, promising to return at dawn, but exhorting the Norwegians meanwhile to let their weary neighbours rest.

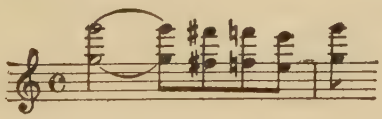
The Norwegians open the baskets, treat themselves freely to the wine, and burst out in more boisterous merriment than before. As they break out into No. 8 again, signs of life begin to be noticeable on the Dutch ship, the sea around which gradually begins to move, though the waters elsewhere are perfectly calm. On the ship appears a blue flame — a watch fire; a violent wind whistles through the rigging; the crew seems to have been called into life by the flame. They are still invisible, but their " Yohoho! " to the melody of No. 1, comes booming hoarsely through speaking-trumpets. The storm-music of the overture breaks out again, No. 2 being particularly prominent.

The Dutch sailors' song is divided between savage defiances of the storm wind — for their sails are stout, Satan having blessed them ages ago — and ironic appeals to their gloomy captain to go on land again to seek for the faithful maiden's hand, for seven more weary years have gone by. During this chorus the wind howls

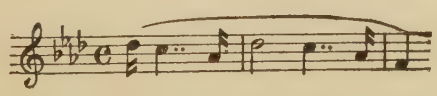
about the Dutch ship and the sea is in commotion round it, although elsewhere sea and air are calm as before. The Norwegian sailors, who have listened to the Dutchmen's chorus first in astonishment, then in horror, try to keep up their courage by singing their own song again, but this is ultimately swept aside by the Dutchmen's chorus, which ends in an outburst of uncanny laughter.

The Norwegian sailors, awed to silence by the supernatural storm and the unearthly shouting of the crew of the other ship, leave the deck in terror, making the sign of the Cross; it is this action of theirs that provokes the harsh laughter of the Dutchmen. There is a *fortissimo* crash in the orchestra; then the former death-like silence and darkness settle on the Dutch ship again, and sea and air become everywhere calm, as at the commencement of the scene; the horns give out softly the Dutchman's theme (No. 1), which is answered by the motive of Redemption, and after a long kettle-drum roll a sombre chord in the bassoons and horns prolongs itself for a time and then dies into silence.

After a brief pause an agitated figure appears in the orchestra, terminating in a phrase that will be associated afterwards with Erik's denunciation of Senta:

(34)

Senta comes hurriedly out of the house, followed by Erik, who is in a state of wild excitement. Is what she has just told him true, he asks her, or is he dreaming? To the accompaniment of a figure expressive of her agitation:

(35)



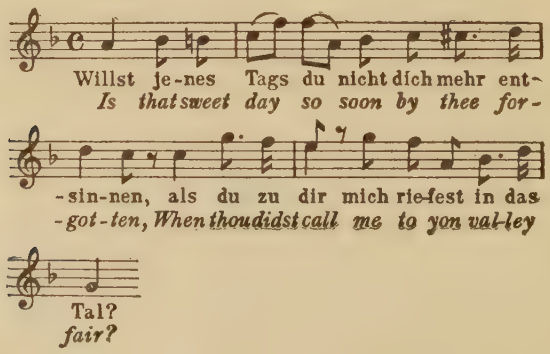
Senta, painfully moved, turns away, saying, "Oh, ask me not!" Upon a restless orchestral basis compounded of Nos. 34 and 35 Erik breaks out in despair: what evil power, he asks, is it that has led her astray, what spell is it that blinds her? Scarcely

had the stranger crossed the threshold, he says, when she gave him her hand. She implores him to leave her, swearing that she is driven onward by powers within her stronger than herself; but the self-pitying Erik will not be denied. He reminds her of something she has apparently forgotten — she had once plighted her troth to himself and promised him eternal love.

Wagner lays it down that Erik must not be made "a sentimental whiner," but "stormy, impulsive, and sombre, like every man who lives alone, particularly in the highlands of the North"; his cavatina in the third act should not be sung in a "sugary" style, but ought rather to express "the very depths of affliction and melancholy."

It is perhaps a little difficult for the actor to carry out these instructions to the full, for the cavatina:

(36)


Willst je-nes Tags du nicht dich mehr ent-
Is that sweet day so soon by thee for-
-sin-nen, als du zu dir mich rie-fest in das
-got-ten, When thou didst call me to yon val-ley
Tal?
fair?

in which Erik reminds Senta of their days of simple happiness together, melodious as it is, has, for our modern ears, a touch of Italian softness in it.

During the course of the cavatina the Dutchman has appeared. Overhearing Erik's final words asking if, when Senta laid her hand in his, she did not promise to be true to him, he rushes forward with a terrible cry of "All is lost! My hope has fled for ever!" Erik recoils horror-struck; Senta places herself before the Dutchman, who frenziedly reproaches her with having broken

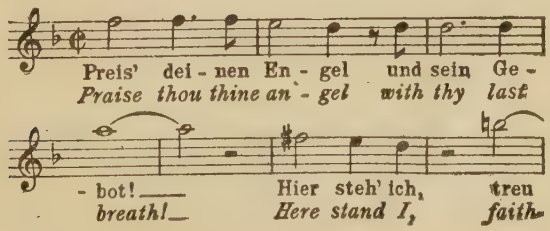
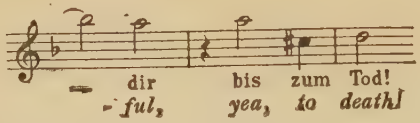
her troth and bids her farewell; he will to sea again, but she shall not perish with him. He pipes shrilly on his whistle to his crew, bidding them hoist the sails. The voices unite in a trio based on Nos. 34 and 35, the Dutchman upbraiding Senta with her faithlessness and mockery of him, Senta protesting that she is still faithful, and Erik asking himself in horror if he is dreaming.

Moving apart from them, the Dutchman tells Senta that there lies upon him a grievous curse, from which he can be ransomed only by the love of a woman faithful unto death itself; though she gave him her promise, she did not swear it before God; this has saved her, for the fate of those who break their troth to him is eternal damnation; the curse has already claimed victims unnumbered, but Senta at least shall escape it.

Bidding her farewell he turns to go, but Senta holds him back. Well does she know him, she says, and well she knows his doom: the end of all his woes has come, for her love and faithfulness shall take his curse away. Erik gives a despairing cry for help, and Daland, Mary, and the maidens come out hurriedly from the house, and the sailors from the ship. She knows him not, replies the Dutchman to Senta; and pointing to his ship, the blood-red sails of which are now spread, he cries that he is the Flying Dutchman, whose ship is known to all who sail the sea. He rushes on board the ship, which immediately leaves the shore for the open sea, the Dutch crew singing No. 1 in wild chorus.

Senta attempts to follow the Dutchman, but is held back by Daland, Erik, and Mary. She tears herself free and, rushing to a rock that overhangs the water, cries after the departing Dutchman, with all her strength, the last assurance of her love and faithfulness:

(37)



Then she leaps into the sea. The Dutchman's ship instantly sinks with all the crew and quickly disappears; the sea throws up a huge wave and then falls back in a whirlpool. The orchestra, as at the end of the overture, breaks into the two motives of Redemption (No. 3 and No. 9), which are followed by a thundering response of the Dutchman's motive in the heavy brass. The stage directions in the original score at this point run thus: "In the glow of the setting sun the glorified forms of the Dutchman and Senta are seen rising above the wreck, clasped in each other's arms, soaring upwards."

As we have already said, the opera, like the overture, originally ended in a strain of high exultation. At some later date Wagner conceived the happy idea of ending both of them with the effect, as of transfiguration, to which we have drawn attention our analysis of the overture. It was presumably when he made magical change in the ending of the opera that he added some final stage directions that appear in only one of the many editions of the *Flying Dutchman*: "A dazzling glory illumines the group in the background; Senta raises the Dutchman, presses him to her breast, and points him towards heaven with hand and glance."

Rienzi was too much of a "grand opera" to be pure Wagner; but *The Flying Dutchman* was a work that no one but himself could have written at that time.

RICHARD WAGNER

RICHARD WAGNER was born at Leipzig on the 22nd May, 1813. He was ostensibly the son of Karl Friedrich Wagner, a police-court clerk in the town, and his wife (*née* Johanna Bertz), but there is reason to suppose that his true father was a friend of the family, the gifted actor, painter, and dramatist, Ludwig Geyer. Karl Friedrich Wagner died on the 22nd November of the same year, and on the 28th August, 1814, Geyer married the widow and undertook the charge of her seven children, the eldest of whom was fourteen and a half. The new household removed at the same time to Dresden, returning to Leipzig thirteen years later. Geyer meanwhile had died in 1821.

Wagner's musical studies were casual; the only systematised instruction he had was from a Leipzig teacher, Weinlig, and even this lasted only some six months (in 1831). In all essentials Wagner may be regarded as a self-taught musician, like Hugo Wolf and Elgar.

The family had extensive theatrical connections, owing to Geyer, and more than one member of it adopted the stage as a profession. At the age of twenty Wagner took up, at Würzburg, the first of a number of engagements as conductor and trainer with small operatic companies; the others were at Magdeburg (July 1834), Königsberg (August 1836), and Riga (August 1837). In these wretched surroundings he learned his theatrical and musical technique at first hand. At Königsberg, on the 24th November, 1836, he married Minna Planer, an actress connected with the troupe.

His earliest operas were *The Fairies* (1833) and *The Ban upon Love,* founded on Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (1834–6). *Rienzi* was written between 1838 and 1840. In the hope of getting this produced in Paris he went there, *via* London, in September 1839. After two years and a half of bitter disappointments and cruel privations he returned to Germany in April 1842, *Rienzi* having been accepted by Dresden, where it was performed on the 20th October. In February 1843 he became one of the conductors at the Dresden Opera. *The Flying Dutchman* was produced there on the 2nd January, 1843, and *Tannhäuser* on the 19th October, 1845. He finished *Lohengrin* in March 1848, but this opera was not produced till the 26th August, 1850, when Liszt gave it at Weimar.

Meanwhile, owing to his having become mixed up with the political agitations of 1848 and 1849, Wagner had had to flee the country in May of the latter year, a warrant having been issued for his arrest. His exile lasted till 1860, when he was given permission to return to any part of Germany but Saxony; this last restriction also was removed in 1862. During all these years his chief headquarters were Switzerland. His time was mainly occupied in thinking out his new theories of the musical drama, working at the *Ring, Tristan,* and the *Mastersingers,* and trying to get his operas given in Paris and elsewhere. In Paris, in 1861, he produced *Tannhäuser* in a revised version.

He was practically ruined financially when, in 1864, the eighteen-year-old King Ludwig II, who had just succeeded to the throne of Bavaria, took him under his protection and invited him to Munich, where *Tristan* was first produced on the 10th June, 1865, followed by the *Mastersingers* on the 21st June, 1868, the *Rhinegold* on the 22nd September, 1869, and the *Valkyrie* on the 26th June, 1870. It was not long before he was virtually driven out of Munich. Various political parties and persons tried to make him their cat's-paw, his influence with the King being enormous; and his refusal to mix himself up with politics only brought on his head the enmity of all the intriguers. There were other reasons for his unpopularity — his notorious association with Cosima von Bülow

(the daughter of Liszt), the jealousy aroused in professional circles in the town by his bringing in protégés of his own, such as Bülow and Peter Cornelius, and, above all, the expense he was proving to the State, owing to the King's infatuation for him. A great scheme drawn up by him for a model Music School in Munich came to nothing. A project for a splendid Wagner theatre in the town, the architectural plans for which were actually drawn up, met with the same fate.

In December 1865 the feeling in the Bavarian capital was so strong against him that the King had to request him to leave it for a time, though the royal favour was not withdrawn, and an annuity was settled on him. After a little wandering in Switzerland, Wagner settled in the spring of 1866 in a villa at Triebschen, near Lucerne, which remained his home for some years, though he occasionally visited Munich.

His first marriage had never been happy. Minna died in Dresden on the 25th January, 1866; and on the 25th August, 1870, Wagner married Cosima; their son, Siegfried, had been born on the 6th June, 1869.

The last years of Wagner's life were mainly occupied with the completion of the *Ring* and the founding of his own theatre at Bayreuth. This, after the overcoming of incredible difficulties of all kinds, was opened in August 1876 with the first complete performance of the *Ring*, under Hans Richter.

The years immediately following 1876 were largely devoted to efforts to raise funds for the Bayreuth theatre. Friends and admirers came to his help, and he himself set out to raise money by giving concerts. In May 1877 he conducted six concerts in the Albert Hall; Queen Victoria, being unable to attend the concerts in person, invited Wagner to Windsor. The six concerts were so great a success that a further two had to be given.

The *Ring* was popularised by an enterprising German impresario, Angelo Neumann, of Leipzig, who, while most of the other theatres were hesitating before its difficulties, took the work on tour through several countries in 1881, London being among the towns visited.

Parsifal, which had been written between January 1877 and April 1879, was given at Bayreuth on the 26th July, 1882, under Hermann Levi. Wagner died suddenly in Venice, of heart disease, on the 13th February, 1883; five days later he was buried in the garden of his stately house — Wahnfried — at Bayreuth.

*

ERNEST NEWMAN

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